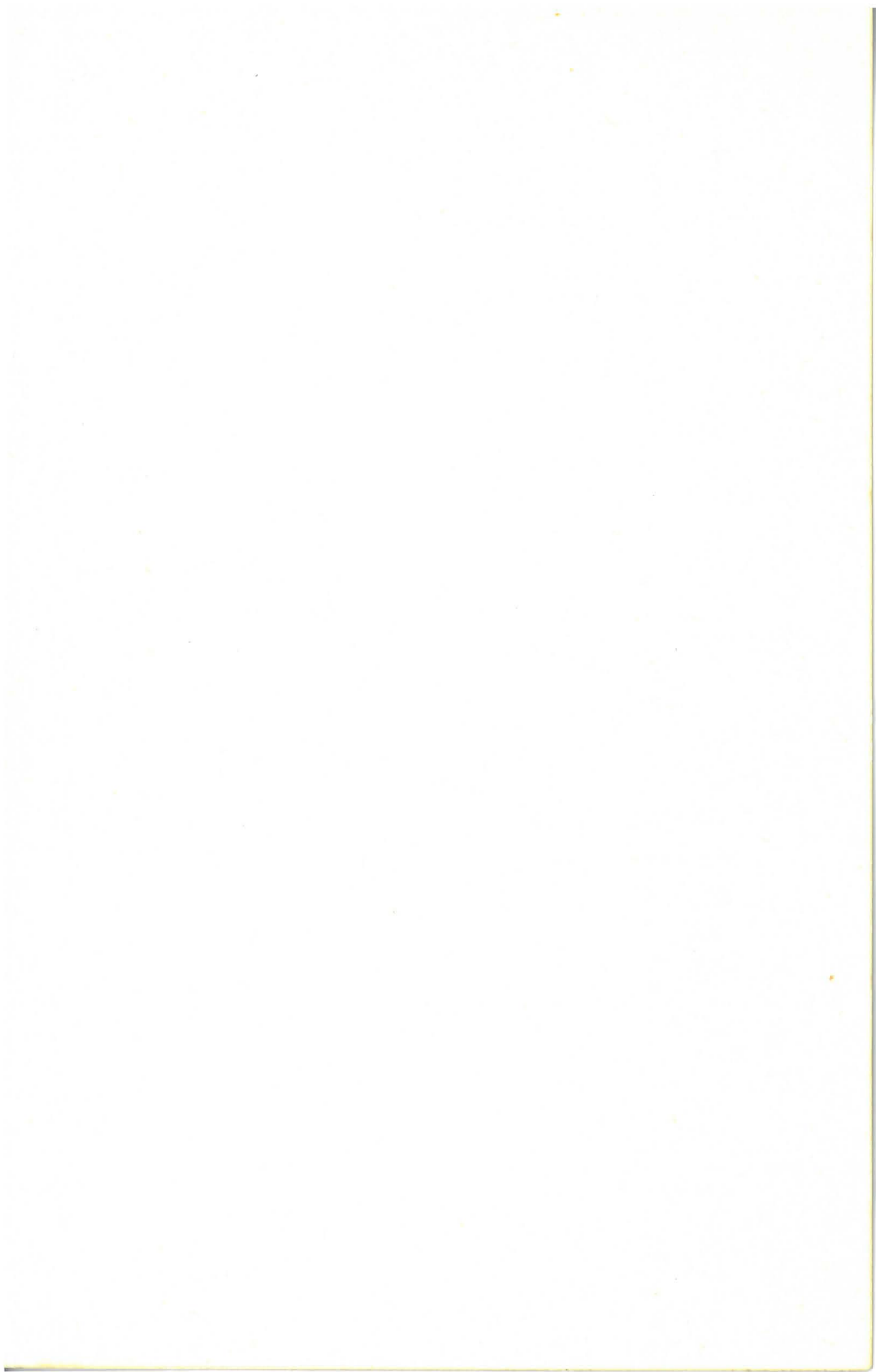




THE
MENNONITE
BRETHREN
MISSION

IN
LATIN AMERICA

J.J. TOEWS



**The Mennonite Brethren
Mission
in
Latin America**

Board of Christian Literature
General Conference of the Mennonite
Brethren Church of North America

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

The Mennonite Brethren, representing a small segment of the Christian world, have been strongly involved in missionary outreach in their 115 years of history. Around the world they now number 80,000. The North American segment, the chief missionary base, represents 30,000; Russia an estimated 20,000; the remaining 30,000 are the fruit of missionary endeavor around the world. The current annual denominational budget for evangelism and church planting abroad is one and a half million dollars.

The present volume is the first of four in a series designed to up-date the story of Mennonite Brethren missions. This book covers missionary outreach in Latin America. The introductory volume will discuss the philosophy and principles of missions. Two other volumes in the series will detail the endeavors in Asia and Europe-Africa. The publishers are grateful to the team of three knowledgeable authors—Dr. J. J. Toews, Dr. G. W. Peters, and Dr. J. B. Toews—who have over the past five years expended much time and labor, much of it gratis, in the gathering and writing of their material. These volumes have been principally designed for classroom use in Bible institutes, colleges and seminaries, but we hope their readership will be much broader.

Dr. Paul Hiebert is serving as general editor for the entire series. For that reason we have included a study guide written by him in this, the first volume.

Dr. J. J. Toews has not only served on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services, but has completed a dissertation for the Graduate School of Dallas Theological Seminary, "The History of Mennonite Brethren Missions in Latin America" (1972). He has made several visits to Latin American countries, the most recent being an eight-month teaching and preaching assignment which began in March 1975.

Our hope is that this volume, along with the others in the series, will not only summarize the mission movement but will in God's providence revitalize the churches and provide a framework for a new thrust in outreach. To help accomplish this we have included study questions for chapters two through six. Coupled with the study guide (Appendix A), they can help us focus on the key issues in missions today.

Board of Christian Literature

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This history of Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America is based on a more comprehensive treatment in a dissertation submitted to Dallas Theological Seminary in 1972. Copies are available in libraries of Mennonite Brethren schools and churches in Canada and the U.S.

The material in this book has been revised on the basis of sources not available when the dissertation was done. Additional information gathered during a six-month ministry to the countries included has also been included. Finally, with the encouragement of the General Conference Board of Christian Literature, a resume of the history of the Mennonite Brethren churches of Latin America, particularly in Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil has been included.

The author assumes responsibility for the omissions and errors in the history and interpretation of events, and pleads for your tolerance. However, every effort has been made to carry out the research carefully and to interpret the data without bias. We hope that this material will help you in understanding God's marvelous ways of working through frail human instruments to build His church in Latin America.

J. J. Toews

INTRODUCTION

History is the record of events—of peoples, places and times. Places vary a great deal. One of the first experiences North Americans have when they begin to participate in the life of South America is culture shock. This is the feeling, first of bewilderment, then of disorientation, and, finally, of depression, that comes when they realize that all they have learned is of little use to them now. Even a casual stop at the crowded market to choose from strange fruits with no fixed prices and to bargain with the vendor who knows no English can be a major undertaking. But cultural differences go much deeper than customs and languages. People live in different worlds. The concepts they use to organize their experiences, and the assumptions they make about what is right and wrong, true and false, real and unreal, are fundamentally different.

The implications of cultural differences for missions are many. Missionaries must learn to speak and think in new languages, and live in new societies. Their children are often people of two worlds. And the Gospel itself must be planted in the local culture. So long as it remains a potted plant, brought in from without, it will be foreign and dependent upon others for its life.

Times, too, are different. It is less than a century since vaccinations, antibiotics, cars, airplanes and radios have transformed the style of mission work, and less than a decade since world-wide television and computer services have become distinct possibilities. We can only imagine what channels will be open for the communication of the Gospel in two or three decades. Nevertheless, we must prepare for the future now.

There is a danger in missions that we forget the differences in times, that we judge the actions of the past from the vantage point of today. We need to remember the difficulties of disease and transportation that the early mis-

sionaries faced, as well as the ideas that governed their thinking. But we cannot justify using their methods when these no longer fit our times. We can learn from the past, for its failures as well as its successes, but we must be keenly aware of the many new forces at work in our day.

While times and places vary, in some ways people are the same. The missionaries we send are one of us. We may imagine that their high calling overshadows all other areas of their lives, but they, too, face the unending series of everyday decisions and problems that plague us. They are concerned with rising prices, and with balancing their budgets. They worry about the education of their children. The pipes in their houses spring leaks and their appliances break down. Moreover, they must work out relationships with their fellow missionaries, people whom they did not choose as associates and who, like themselves, often hold strong feelings about the work.

It is precisely because missionaries are like us that we can learn how God works in human lives when we hear their experiences, and can bear them up in their weaknesses in our prayers. One of the most stimulating ways of studying the history of missions and the church is to study biographies of God's people.

History is more than a record of events. It is also the flow of ideas that inspired people to act and guided their decisions. The Mennonite Brethren mission work in South America is only a small part of the broad sweep of the modern mission movement. The methods we used, and the policies we made, often reflected the mission thinking current in that day.

The North American Mennonite Brethren mission movement itself began at the turn of the century. The early immigrants brought with them from Russia the vision for mission outreach that had characterized the Mennonite Brethren Church from its birth. By 1901 the small conference had sent out missionaries to work in India alongside Mennonite Brethren missionaries from Russia serving in the Baptist field. The program expanded slowly until the Second World War. Africa and China were added when men who heard God's call pioneered work in these countries.

They returned to ask the conference to assume responsibility for the new churches.

A second wave of Mennonite immigrants settled in a series of colonies in the Paraguayan Chaco. They, too, felt a burden to preach the Gospel, particularly to the Indians that lived around them, and they organized a mission board, "Licht den Indianern," to carry on the work.

The end of the Second World War saw an explosion of mission activity in North America that included the Mennonite Brethren churches. The doors to many countries were open for evangelism. Spared the destruction of war, Canada and the United States were entering an era of economic prosperity. This combination of resources and a new vision to proclaim Christ to all peoples moved the center of mission activity from England and Europe to North America.

As Dr. J. J. Toews points out, the expansion of the Mennonite Brethren mission program was particularly dramatic in South America. But with expansion came critical questions of strategy. Where and with whom should the missionaries work? What were their goals? And what methods should they use? There were, and are, no simple answers to these questions. The debates were often long, and sometimes hot, because those involved, missionaries, members of the mission board and church leaders, realized that the outcomes would affect the growth of the church and the eternal destinies of people.

South America was uniquely open to the Gospel at this time. Throughout much of the country the traditional religions had given way to the Catholicism preached by early missionaries following on the heels of the explorers. The hold of the Catholic Church on the masses began to weaken after the Second World War, however. This was particularly true in the case of the small but growing middle class that were arising out of the rapid economic development in certain of the countries. The result was a spiritual vacuum that made South America an area of high mission potential.

In this volume, Dr. J. J. Toews traces the major events in the history of Mennonite Brethren missions in South America. In doing so he helps us to gain an overview of

where we have come from, where we are, and where we are headed.

It is easy enough to read through the story of the Mennonite Brethren mission work in South America and to rejoice in what God has done. But as we read we must look through the words to the lives of the people to whom they refer--to the people's joys and sorrows, their problems and debates their uncertainties and convictions, their failures and triumphs. Dr. Toews points us not only to the events of history, but also to the people who played an important part in determining the course of these events.

There remains another unwritten history which we must remember. There are the thousands of people who worked and gave of their means to support the work. There are the national leaders who trudged weary miles to visit remote villages. And there are the now unknown Christians who witnessed to their neighbors, relatives and enemies, who spent unseen hours in prayer, and who gave what little they had. The full telling of the story of the Mennonite Brethren churches in South America must await our entry into heaven.

Paul G. Hiebert
General Editor

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

1	BOMAS	Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services
2	EFMA	Evangelical Foreign Mission Association
3	HCJB	Heralding Christ Jesus Blessings (Radio Station)
4	KfK	Kommission fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheit
5	KMBC	Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference
6	M. B.	Mennonite Brethren
7	MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
8	WRMF	World Radio Missionary Fellowship
9	Association	German speaking Mennonite Brethren Conference in Brazil
10	Board	Without accompanying qualifications refers to Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services
11	Conference	General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America
12	Convention	Portuguese speaking Mennonite Brethren Conference in Brazil
13	General Conference	General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Church unless otherwise qualified

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MENNONITE BRETHREN COME TO LATIN AMERICA



1

MENNONITE BRETHREN COME TO LATIN AMERICA

What has been said of Brazil can also be said of Latin America as a whole: "in a radiant land is a sad people"; or "in a rich land is a poor people"; again, "in a lush land is a vigorous, exuberant people."¹ Latin America is "an awakening continent" that has made tremendous strides forward and experienced unexpected reverses. Despite thriving metropolitan areas, tribesmen still live in what we consider a primitive setting.

Today the world is intensely aware that 300,000,000 people live in Latin America. Resources have hardly been touched, while the human skills and labor seem unlimited.

Many observers see Latin America as a unit because of its geographic "togetherness." Furthermore, common roots in the Iberian culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth century also tend to obscure the diversity developed within so large an area. Generalizations thus tend to be half-truths.

CULTURAL REGIONS

There are three distinct cultural regions in Latin America. *The Amerindian region* includes Mexico, Guatemala, and the other Central American republics, as well as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, northern Chile, and the northwestern portion of Brazil. When the Spanish conquerors of the sixteenth century reached this part of the world, they found the highly developed cultures of the Aztec, the Maya, the Chibcha, the Inca, and the Aymara Indians. Today more than 16 million Indians and more than forty million Mestizos (Indian-White mixtures) live in the area. A variety of languages and customs helps maintain cultural

barriers for a rich mosaic. *The Afro-American region* includes most of the West Indies, the Guianas, a large portion of Brazil, and portions of the lowlands of Venezuela and Colombia. The already sparse aboriginal population practically vanished as Europeans came, bringing their diseases. Lacking immunity, the population shrank rapidly, while others were forced into slave labor.

The need for labor on the European-owned plantations also resulted in the importation of African slaves. Marriages between the slaves and the aborigines produced mulattoes, who had their own cultural distinctives.

The Latin American, or Ibero-American region, includes Uruguay, Argentina, most of Chile, southern Brazil and Paraguay. Present population is mostly Caucasoid, with relatively few Indians. To this region Europeans brought their cattle, and the beef industry became the dominant means of livelihood.

Regarding the difference between these regions Wagley says,

Highland Bolivia, with its mass of Aymara, and Quechua speaking Indians, contrasts vividly with neighboring Brazil, which is a vast lowland inhabited by people of three racial stocks. It would be hard to find two countries more different than Argentina and Mexico in terms of physical environment, archaeological and historical past, and the composition of the population. Within the Latin American community of nations, one finds minuscule nations such as El Salvador, Costa Rica and Panama. Along with gigantic Brazil, there are countries proud of their democratic traditions such as Uruguay and Chile, and countries such as Paraguay and Nicaragua, where democratic institutions are almost non-existent. Some nations can boast of a high literacy rate, such as Uruguay (80%) and Argentina (86%), while in others such as Brazil (48.2%) and Ecuador (48.9%) more than half the population is illiterate.²

LANGUAGE AREAS

Latin America has several distinct language areas. Spanish is used in most Latin American countries, while Portuguese is used in Brazil. There are pockets of French

and English-speaking people, as well as numerous languages spoken by Indian tribes and European ethnic groups.

SOCIAL CLASSES

Distinct subcultures based on social stratification exist in Latin America. Church historian Kenneth S. Latourette enumerates the following:

- (a) The Spanish-born Peninsulares at the top.
- (b) The Creoles, holders of the less important offices, land owners, business and professional men, and artisans.
- (c) The Mestizos, usually descendants of the irregular unions.
- (d) The Negroes.
- (e) The Indians.³

These may live in close geographic proximity, but their pattern of life is very different. Church planters must consider such cultural variations if their work is to succeed. Their approaches and methods must vary according to the people whom they serve.

CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

Despite the diversities in language and cultural regions, pervasive similarities must be considered. This is more than just geographic "togetherness." Wagley himself admits "that in Latin America, there are probably more profound similarities among the countries than among any similar number of countries anywhere in the world."⁴

The Latin American Mindset

The "causative mentality" based on Grecian logistics, the "intuitive mentality" so evident in Far Eastern religions, and the "imaginative mentality" pervasive in animism, have distinct characteristics. But none of them expresses fully the quality of the Latin American mentality. The Iberian culture imposed on the people injected certain causative qualities, while the Catholic Church with its rituals stimu-

lated imaginative elements in the fertile soil of the animistic beliefs held by many people. Thus a unique Latin American mindset resulted.

In the first place, this mindset stresses living rather than having. Many in Latin America enjoy colorful rituals, holidays, and recreational diversion more than the capitalistic drive for acquisition. Consequently, the Pentecostals, with an obvious emotional quality in their church life, fare much better than the historic denominations with their more rational emphasis.

Secondly, this mindset is reluctant to make decisions. Once the Europeans arrived, the aborigine was not permitted to make any more decisions. He was simply forced to obey. His religious concerns were cared for by the priest keeping pace with the marching soldier.

Not having been encouraged to make religious decisions, the national was often bewildered when the Protestants arrived with a variety of denominations, all appealing to the same Bible but interpreting it in so many different ways. Few Protestants took time to teach Latin Americans to analyze the Scriptures or encouraged them to make their own decisions.

Thirdly, this mentality is often influenced by emotion. Nida writes, "Latins generally see reality, not through the process of reason, but in the passion of feeling—those intuitive perceptions of life coming in the midst of intense emotional involvement."⁵ The Latin American has "a theoretical and an idealistic rather than a practical approach to problems."⁶ Because of this, the average *didactic* evangelical meeting appears colorless, tasteless, and boring to a Latin American, who yearns for the expression of sentiments of the heart. To satisfy his needs, meetings must include more pageantry, drama, and group participation in corporate acts of worship.

The Process of Secularization in Latin America

Before Europeans arrived in Latin America, Indian tribes practiced their own religions. However, when the European invaders came, they made conquest, settlement,

and baptism part of their program. External force assured compliance.

With the rise of nationalism and native-born leaders, a struggle for independence developed. Mexico gained its autonomy in 1821, Brazil in 1822, while Simon Bolivar freed Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela from European domination in the 1830s.

After independence, friends and foes of the church polarized into opposing camps. In many countries the conservative political parties emerged favoring the traditional church, while liberal political parties sought to curtail its influence. As a result of the ensuing struggle, Mexico decreed separation of state and church in 1860, Brazil in 1870, Bolivia in 1905, and Ecuador in 1906. Other countries soon followed.* While the Catholic Church retained considerable influence in many sectors in Latin America, the struggle did break its dominance and strangle-hold on the people and opened the door for missions.

Nationalism

Nationalism as a political force has been stirring for some years in Latin America. At times it even precipitated extreme acts such as the expropriation of foreign holdings. It aided the revolution in Cuba, while generating resentment in Panama against the United States monopoly in the Canal area. It has strained relations between Peru and the United States, and more recently influenced Chileans to vote for a socialist government.

Nationalism has expressed itself in other ways as well. A number of Latin American countries are striving for economic independence. Brazil prohibits importation of cars to boost its automobile industry. Although neither Colombia nor Uruguay make automobiles, both countries restrict their import in order to conserve their currencies. Landlocked Paraguay is making a desperate effort to settle

* Latourette, Vol. III, p. 285, gives a more detailed description of this struggle.

and cultivate vast areas of the arid Chaco in order to become self-sufficient agriculturally.

In education even greater efforts are being made. Universities are experiencing unprecedented growth. Educators say: "We must have our own trained lawyers, doctors, businessmen and teachers."

Nationalism has had a profound effect on the Protestant church in Latin America. Willems notes:

Most schisms in the Protestant Churches of Brazil and Chile seem to be directly or indirectly related to nationalism. This term covers a variety of things, especially in connection with the activities of foreign missionaries and the foundation of institutions depending upon higher ecclesiastical authorities in the United States or Europe. Manifestations of nationalism rank all the way from criticism of foreign missions and missionaries to internal differences in which the natives line up against the foreigners.⁷

Willems also points out that nationalism was one of the contributing factors in the rupture which split the Baptist church in Brazil in 1923.

RELIGIOUS SETTING

Christianity came to Latin America in several ways and for different purposes.

Roman Catholicism accompanied the Spanish invaders in early sixteenth century. They often used force to compel the aboriginals to accept new beliefs without the benefit of adequate Christian teaching or nurture. Only during the recent struggles for independence did the church lose its monopoly in religious affairs, though it still retained a strong influence.

Protestant Christianity made no significant impact until James Thomson arrived in 1817, at a time when many of "the revolutionaries had an almost fanatical zeal for education and made enormous efforts to extend the liberating ideas."⁸ Thomson, a representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society, found open doors as he introduced the Lancaster School System, largely in Argentina. For lack of other reading material, he offered the Scriptures to students.

In 1838, Allen F. Gardiner left the British Navy to bring the Gospel to the Indians in the south. He founded the Patagonian Missionary Society, which later became the South American Missionary Society. Other interdenominational missions followed, particularly after World War I, and later the Montevideo Missionary Conference. World War II was followed by an even greater movement of independent missions into the Latin American arena. Most came to reach the Indian tribes, rather than to evangelize those related to the Catholic Church.

The Protestant movement was reinforced by immigrants from Europe, who established their churches in Latin America. Scottish settlers brought the Presbyterian Church to Argentina in 1826. They were soon followed by Welsh sheepgrowers with their Anglican faith. The Waldensians came from Italy to Uruguay in 1850, while Germans introduced Lutheranism when they arrived in great numbers in Argentina and Southern Brazil in the early part of the nineteenth century. Immigrants from other denominations followed. Among the latter were Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren, whose beginnings we shall trace in more detail below. The faith of most of these Protestants remained largely within the respective ethnic groups and did not constitute a strong evangelistic force among the Indians and the Spanish-speaking population.

Another major Protestant stream was the coming of denominational missions. The Presbyterian Mission came to Colombia in 1855, to Brazil in 1857, and to other countries thereafter. The American Methodists arrived in Brazil in 1867; the Southern Baptists in 1881; the Swedish Pentecostals and the Assemblies of God in 1913. In 1923, the Missionary Alliance arrived in Colombia. The Mennonite Brethren Missions of North America officially began in Latin America in 1945. These denominational agencies did not forget the Indian people, but they also directed their missionary efforts to the rest of the population.

These groups arrived on the scene in America at a time when Latin American isolation from the rest of the world was declining. Scientific interest had begun to stir, while institutions of learning bulged with students. Industriali-

zation had begun to make tremendous strides forward though urbanization often outran industrialization. Population growth was one of the greatest in the world.

All of these subjected the old social structures to unprecedented pressure. Thus when the influence of the Catholic Church declined, many people sensed the need for new meaning and security. This need was recognized by Mennonite Brethren Missions.

MENNONITE BRETHREN IMMIGRATION

The German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church emerged on the Latin American scene as a result of immigration from Europe and not as a product of evangelism and missions. These churches possessed the same ethnic background as the Mennonite Brethren who lived in Russia and North America. They came to Latin America with other Mennonites, as refugees from persecution and war, in three different movements: the first in 1930, which settled mainly in Brazil and Paraguay; the second came in 1932 and was settled for the most part in Paraguay, with some in Brazil. A third group came in 1947, while a fourth smaller group (1,578 people) came in October, 1948, about half (751) going to Uruguay and the rest settling in Paraguay.

THE GERMAN-SPEAKING MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES IN BRAZIL

Early Settlements and Migrations

Of the Mennonite refugees that left Russia in 1929 and arrived in Germany, 1,200 settled in Santa Catarina State in Southern Brazil. They came to Brazil against the advice of MCC, which wanted them to go to Paraguay, a country with exemption from military service. Brazil had made military service mandatory for all citizens.

The refugees received assistance for transportation on credit from the German government, which wanted to strengthen the already existing German settlements in Brazil. The German Red Cross supplied the refugees with

household utensils, while the Hanseatic Colonization Society, through its agent, promised them land with no downpayment and easy credit terms. Furthermore, the Mennonites of Holland, who had less conscience scruples in regards to military service, offered them further assistance if they desired to settle in Brazil.

The first group arrived in Brazil in early 1930 and was settled along the upper end of the Krauel River and along five of its small tributaries, 90 miles west of Blumenau in Santa Catarina State. At that time the municipality was called Hansa Hammonia, but during World War II it was changed to Ibirama. The whole region is dense, sub-tropical jungle and rugged mountain area.

The settlement called Krauel consisted of three villages: Witmarsum, Gnadenenthal, and Waldheim. Original leaders were Heinrich Martens, Heinrich H. Loewen, Sr., Jacob Huebert, Heinrich Ekk, and David Nikkel.

In late 1930 several hundred Mennonite refugees from Harbin, Manchuria, joined this settlement. Others who came still later found no more room here and thus settled on the Stoltz Plateau and called this settlement Auhagen. Several of the original leaders were Jakob Schellenberg, Johannes Janzen, Johann Hamm, and Franz Fast.

Both of these settlements proved economically very difficult and discouraging. They were isolated and without necessary transportation. Heavy jungle forest on the mountainous terrain presented an unfamiliar challenge to the farmers from the vast plains of the European steppes.*

Many families had to send their young people, particularly daughters, to Blumenau and to Curitiba to earn money to support the family and to keep the disappointing farming operations going. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand why many families left these settlements to work in the cities or to farm near their daughter's work. Many entered dairy farming, so that by 1953 they supplied 75 to 90 percent of the milk needed by Curitiba, a city of 184,000.

* For more detail of difficult environment see P.C. Hiebert, *Mittheilungen von der Reise nach Sued-Amerika*, (1937) pp. 18-31; and A.E. Janzen, *Glimpses of South America*, (1944), pp. 117-123.

Others moved as far north as São Paulo. Forty-two families left the Krauel in 1950 and moved to a large plain in the State of Rio Grandedo Sul. This settlement, popularly known as Bagé, but officially called Colonia Nova, is located 40 miles north of the Uruguay border and 150 miles inland from the coast. By the end of 1951, population in this colony doubled by the addition of 37 more families from the Krauel. In September, 1951, another 70 families left the Krauel to settle in a colony 45 miles northwest of Curitiba, Parana, called New Witmarsum.

The few families that remained in the Krauel, as well as those who moved to the cities, no longer enjoyed the ideological protection of a closed colony. They were thus subjected to the secularizing and disorganizing influence of their new environment.

The Emerging Mennonite Brethren Church

Among the second group of Mennonite refugees that arrived in the Krauel in March of 1930 were two elders of the Mennonite Brethren Church, Jacob Huebert and Heinrich Eck, as well as several ministers.⁹ These, together with some of the Mennonite Brethren Church members, gathered on the ship while enroute from Europe to Brazil and agreed to found a Mennonite Brethren Church according to the principles of faith and practice held by the church in Russia. This decision was announced upon arrival at the Krauel settlement. It soon became evident that many of the settlers had been members of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia.

The beginning of this church came as somewhat of a surprise to those who had thought that in the new settlement there should be only one "united Mennonite Church." Consequently those who remained non-Mennonite Brethren offered some resistance to the new group. But the new church persisted in its intention and grew considerably in the years 1931-36. Many of the settlers experienced conversion and joined this body of believers.

Many of those who later left the Krauel belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church. The departure of Elder

Huebert was particularly significant. G. Rosenfeld became elder of the group which remained behind, while Elder Huebert became the leader of the Mennonite Brethren in Boqueirão, near Curitiba. These had gathered for some time under the leadership of Peter Hamm.

The threatened disintegration of the Krauel settlement generated renewed efforts to unify the few that remained into a single church. Even the generous supporters from Holland and Germany called for a strengthening of the settlement through unity, which was taken to mean unity of church as well. Settlement and church leaders did not always understand each other, so the tensions grew. This contributed to the departure of most of the Mennonite Brethren members to the Bagé settlement, where the Mennonite Brethren Church became one of the larger and more active bodies of the Mennonite Brethren Association in Brazil.

In time Mennonite Brethren churches were organized in other locations. These joined in 1960 to form the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Association of Brazil, a conference that sought to maintain unity in doctrine, assist smaller churches, and carry the Gospel to the many Germans settled in Santa Catarina. It is useful to look briefly at each of the Mennonite Brethren congregations in Brazil.

Mennonite Brethren Churches in the State of Catarina

Witmarsum: With the departure of many of the people to other settlements in Brazil, the church at Witmarsum, Santa Catarina, was closed. New life, however, resulted from missionary work done by other Mennonite Brethren churches of the Association. In 1961, and again in 1962, workers came to conduct vacation Bible school. In 1936, the Peter Wienses began a fruitful ministry in Witmarsum, resulting in several conversions. A Mennonite Brethren church of 21 members was organized December 6, 1965. Through the impact of repeated vacation Bible schools, regular Sunday services, Sunday school, and evangelistic campaigns, new converts have been added. The church still

receives assistance from outside, both in terms of finances as well as workers, but it is diligently seeking to fulfill its function as a witness in the surrounding area.

Blumenau in Santa Catarina has a population of about 125,000, with a strong German background in terms of culture and industry. At one time 95% of the inhabitants were German, but this has declined to about 65%.

A small fellowship group of evangelical believers had been meeting in the city for several years prior to 1930. At about this time, Elder Jacob Huebert and H. Eck from the Krauel visited the group. They helped re-organize it as a church affiliated with the Mennonite Brethren Church in Waldheim in the Krauel. In 1949, G.H. Rosenfeld, leader of the Waldheim Mennonite Brethren Church, visited the group and renewed their relationship with the mother church in the Krauel.

With financial help from Curitiba and North America the congregation erected a church building in 1956 on a lot given to the group by William and Ida Koettger. Several brethren were elected to serve as ministers and deacons. These began regular services, including Sunday school and youth meetings. Later leaders included Hans Kasdorf, who served for four and a half years, and Abraham Dueck, Heinrich Janzen, and Franz Heinrich. The church membership grew from 20 in 1956 to 36 in 1959, and 56 in 1965.

By this time the church was self-supporting and had a strong emphasis on outreach and missions in its program. A weekly 15-minute radio program made the church known to the people in the surrounding area. Bible studies resulted in the formation of new groups in such places as Salto Weissbach, Massaranduba and Encano do Norte. Younger women from Mennonite Brethren families coming to Blumenau for employment assisted in the spreading of the Gospel.

Among the new outreaches, work at Encano do Norte grew so rapidly that the Brazilian Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches meeting in São Paulo in 1969 declared it an independent Mennonite Brethren Church.

Ribeirão do Salto (also known as Saltobach) had its beginning through an evangelical witness started early in the 1930s by Mrs. Schwaerz. With her husband she covered

wide areas in this region on horseback, conducting Sunday schools. Shortly thereafter Gerhard vom Scheidt moved from Blumenau to Saltobach and started Bible study groups and choir work. The newly awakened group separated from the regular Protestant church and received ministerial visits from other Mennonite Brethren churches. The first baptism, however, did not occur until 1952. Two years later a Mennonite Brethren Church with 27 members was founded. This work was weakened when several members moved away, and others had to be disciplined. Today the church has 22 memxers.

Mennonite Brethren Churches in the State of Parana

Boqueirão: The settlers who left the Stoltz Plateau and the Krauel in the early 1930s acquired a land complex (73 Hektar) approximately ten kilometers from the center of Curitiba. Many belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church and gathered for services under the leadership of Peter Hamm. These believers agreed to organize as a Mennonite Brethren church in 1936. When Elder Jacob Huebert arrived from the Krauel, the leadership of the church was turned over to him.

Early meetings were held in a school building which the settlers erected soon after they arrived. Because many families were busy on their dairy farms on Sunday mornings, only the Sunday school for children was conducted in the forenoon. The main worship services followed in the afternoon. As life became more settled, the main worship service moved to the morning.

The church grew, so that by 1958 it had 351 members, although members who lived farther away began meeting in groups in their areas. These, we shall see later, eventually became independent churches.

Numerous pressures during the Second World War limited development. The Brazilian government prohibited the use of the German language. Despite this, German nationalism gained considerable influence. The fact that the Mennonite Brethren Church used one house of worship together with the Mennonite Church of the General Confer-

ence also created certain tensions. Finally, Elder Huebert retired from the leadership in 1948 and recommended that Peter Hamm replace him. These factors made the church vulnerable to various influences, so that actions began to emerge.

About the same time a Bible school was begun in Boqueirão, with Hans Legiehn as one of the teachers. Legiehn emphasized a Bible-based approach to ethics and church life. Many of the students, particularly the older ones, began to rethink the whole matter of the Christian life as it expressed itself in the church. Some who held responsible positions carried their new-found views into the church itself, calling for greater purity on the part of its members. Those who did not have the benefit of such Bible studies were not ready initially to accept this emphasis, while others felt themselves threatened in their church positions. The tensions thus generated led to a greater polarization of positions and to divisions. New Mennonite Brethren churches emerged as a result. Later, however, the parent church began to grow. For the occasion of the Mennonite World Conference in 1972 it even built a separate house of worship.

Vila Guaira: This church began in 1936 as an affiliate of the Boqueirão Mennonite Brethren Church. The group increased in numbers and in 1958 became independent, with Heinrich Abrams as its leader. At first the church held united worship services with the General Conference Mennonite Church in the area. Together they purchased a building lot in 1946 and built a house of worship. In 1963 the Mennonite Brethren Church acquired its own property and built its own building. With membership at a hundred, the church conducts services in the German language, with Hans Goerz as leader.

Xaxim: As noted earlier, the Boqueirão Mennonite Brethren Church was divided in its views. The Committee of Reference and Council of the South American Conference was asked for help and advice. After some study this Committee suggested that perhaps it would be best if those who were dissatisfied in the mother church would organize a Mennonite Brethren Church of their own. Consequently, all

who were interested in beginning a new church were asked to meet in the Boqueirão school on March 31, 1959. At this meeting 47 declared their willingness to be charter members of a new church. They met again the next Sunday in the home of the Hans Wienses and accepted his offer of land for a new church. The cornerstone of the new building was laid on June 15, 1959, and the edifice dedicated on August 2, 1959, with many visitors from neighboring churches attending.

Under the leadership of Hans Wiens the church carries on the Sunday and midweek services. It also has a strong interest in music and youth work. Its youth became involved in extension work, particularly in the establishment of the "Vila Urano" church, which eventually became largely independent. Because of considerable emigration, the membership has remained constant at around 100.

Witmarsum: About 70 families left the Krauel settlement in Santa Catarina in 1951 to found a colony 45 miles northwest of Curitiba called New Witmarsum. Although there were not many Mennonite Brethren among those who migrated, a number were anxious to build a Christlike church and could not agree with the rest of the settlers regarding certain issues relating to church life. Eighteen of these people gathered on June 22, 1958, to begin the Mennonite Brethren Church of Witmarsum.

At first they met in a primitive blacksmith shop and in private homes. During an evangelistic campaign conducted by G. W. Peters several accepted Christ as Saviour, strengthening the group. After much prayer, the church erected its own church building. Currently the church has a membership of 75, and carries out extension work in the outskirts of Campo Largo, a town about 30 kilometers from the colony.

The Mennonite Brethren Church in the State of Rio Grande

Colonia Nova: The difficult economic struggle in the Krauel resulted in many Mennonite Brethren church members leaving the mountainous area in 1950 for the plains near Bagé in the State of Rio Grande Do Sul. There they began a

settlement known as Colonia Nova. Here they grow wheat and raise stock.

Shortly after their arrival, the group organized a Mennonite Brethren church, with Gerhard Schartner as the first leader. The church had a membership of 222 in 1970, and 236 in 1972. As new settlers prospered the church recognized its responsibility as a witness to those in the surrounding area. As a result of the efforts of this church, several Portuguese-speaking Mennonite Brethren churches were started.

São Paulo: Over the years a number of Mennonite Brethren moved to Sao Paulo to find a better livelihood. Among them was Rev. G. H. Rosenfeld. Several brethren from North America, aware of the situation in the city, encouraged Rev. Rosenfeld to visit the Mennonite Brethren in the city and minister to them. He did so and invited them to meet in the home of Adolf Binder on February 21, 1954. Fourteen people responded to the invitation.

At this meeting those present testified to the Lord's leading in their lives. Most of the people expressed regret that because of their move into Sao Paulo they had lost contact with the Mennonite Brethren church, missing the blessings of fellowship. They agreed to form a new group and to affiliate with the Mennonite Brethren Church in Curitiba and Bagé. They further agreed to meet on the first Sunday of the month in one of the homes, asking Rev. Rosenfeld to take the initiative to further guide the group.

As more people moved into the city and joined them, the group became too large to meet in private homes. So it moved to the MCC home. Here believers from other Mennonite churches joined in the services and were also admitted to the Lord's supper. The church was officially accepted into the Association in January, 1962, with 27 full and 10 associate members.

The urgent need for a separate house of worship, coupled with financial help from North America and the volunteer work of the membership, resulted in the purchase of a lot and the construction of a church with a capacity for about 200 people. Dedication was on June 26, 1966.

Rev. Rosenfeld retired at the age of 81 in 1963. A.J. Dick,

an MCC worker from Canada led the church for a year. When the Dicks returned to Canada in 1964, Dr. Henry Loewen assumed responsibility for the spiritual welfare at the church and Gerhard Rempel took responsibility for business matters. For a time Henry Eck replaced Henry Loewen in the ministry.

The church started a mission outreach in the Santo Amaro area of São Paulo, where the young people ministered in the Portuguese language to about 30 to 40 children and teenagers.

Factors Affecting the Development of the Mennonite Brethren Churches

There were distinct spiritual needs in the early Mennonite Brethren Church of Brazil. Speaking of the Mennonite settlers in Brazil, H. S. Bender writes:

The most serious handicap, however, has been the weakness of the church life. There has been, at times, a serious lack of cohesion and of a sense of group responsibility, with resulting evidence of disintegration.¹⁰

Several factors are clearly responsible for this condition.

One is the sudden change from a group consciousness in a closed colony to the daily interaction of the individual with a different culture in a new country, often in close proximity to a fast-growing urban setting. This led to a rejection of old values.

Another is the lack of biblical instruction. Brazil passed a bill in 1938 nationalizing all schools, abolishing foreign teachers, and making Portuguese the language of instruction in the elementary schools. This meant that the Mennonites could not carry on their own schools because of a lack of qualified teachers, since their knowledge of Portuguese was still meager.

Since the nationalization bill of 1938 also prohibited the use of German in churches, church life was also seriously impaired.

Furthermore, years of war and refugee life, plus difficult settlement experiences, kept many from acquiring an education and made attendance at higher institutions of learning

impossible. This resulted in a shortage of qualified ministers.

Finally, the early years of settlement and resettlement required much time and effort simply to provide food, clothing and shelter for the families. As in most pioneer settlements, spiritual concerns were often neglected in favor of material pursuits.

Aid from Churches in North America

Clearly, the churches in Brazil needed assistance. Already in 1938 Mr. and Mrs. Jacob D. Unruh of Shafter had been burdened for the German colonists who had settled in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. In 1940, after considerable difficulty, the Unruhs were able to get their Brazilian papers to go to the aid of these people. The M. B. Church in Shafter gave them its blessings and the Unruhs viewed themselves as Mennonite Brethren missionaries to Brazil. To do this they sold everything they had and ventured out entirely on their own.

Not long after the Unruh's arrival in Brazil, the use of German was forbidden because of the war in Europe. The Unruhs had to leave the German people, assisting the Salvation Army in the operation of an orphanage while they studied the Portuguese language.

After about three years the Unruhs were called by the Mennonite people at Curitiba to help them, since they were not allowed to have services in German. They responded and secured permission to preach in the low German Mennonite dialect, registering the settlement as a Holland Dutch colony.

In this ministry the Unruhs gave not only themselves, but also all their earthly belongings. The attitude of the Unruhs is evident in the following quotation from one of their letters written to the executive secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, pleading for support so that they could go back.

But our Mennonites in Curitiba who have no freedom to gather and edify themselves asked us if we could not take up the work among them. So we came to Curitiba

and the Lord marvelously opened the door for the work. The main message we had in Portuguese and then in our Mennonite dialect. I was the representative for the churches before the government, for the brothers and sisters had no freedom. Their request is that we return within a year to continue the work... should it not be possible that we be returned, then someone else should be sent for the need is great. The field is open. We had about 80-90 children in the Sunday school and young people's meetings, etc. We have acquired our papers for our return to Brazil. Today it is not possible to get permanent papers for Brazil. But we have acquired our permanent papers so that we can continue our work which the Lord has given us.

As you know we went out without support and have spent our own substance of over \$14,000 and I wish we had more and it would also go for this cause. But now, this time, the offering is ourselves. If the Lord gives us a way, we must say: 'Here am I, send us or me...' 11

The Unruhs did return to Brazil and worked in close consultation with the Mennonite Brethren churches in establishing an orphanage and Portuguese-speaking churches.

Aid also came from the churches in the North. The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations defined its ministry to the South American churches in 1966 as follows:

Help our (Mennonite Brethren) brothers in Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, especially in the areas of church life, ministerial support, subsidy and staffing of Bible schools and Theological Institute in Curitiba; leprosy work and relief work. 12

Since much of church life in South America was carried on jointly by the different Mennonite denominations, assistance from the North usually came through the MCC, which addressed itself to all Mennonites. This was particularly the case in evangelism, teaching on the peace position, and relief. However, when it came to a particular need in the Mennonite Brethren Church in South America, the Mennonite Brethren Board would send its representative directly to its sister churches. This applied in questions of church policy, Bible schools and institutes.

For revival and evangelism services this Board sent such men as R. C. Seibel (1948) and C. N. Hiebert (1948-50)

to Brazil through the MCC: both were used effectively. Rosenfeld reports; "Through the blessed ministry of Brother Seibel many people were converted and joined the Mennonite Brethren Church." Brother Hiebert added to his public preaching a particularly effective ministry in house visitation, making 1573 house visits in the two years he and his wife spent in Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

In 1948 the same board sent Rev. B. B. Janz to visit the Mennonite Brethren churches in South America, including Brazil, to help them restore their Mennonite Brethren image, threatened because of strong pressure in favor of one United Mennonite Church. Another objective was to help them resist the impact of German nationalism, which was strongly promoted in most German-speaking settlements before and during World War II and was eager also to capture the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Later, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations sent Rev. John A. Toews, Jr., (1953), Dr. G. W. Peters (1954) and others for a strong revival and evangelism thrust. In 1968, the Janz team went to Brazil independently and conducted evangelistic crusades with unusual success.

In order to assist in the Bible teaching ministry of the church and training of churchworkers, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, in cooperation with the Mennonite Brethren Churches in South America, established local Bible schools both in Curitiba and Bagé.* Regarding these, the South American Conference said,

We consider the Bible school among the special blessings that the Lord has given unto us as a Mennonite Brethren Conference. In fact, we consider them as a gracious gift of our Father in heaven.¹⁴

The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations furnished most of the teachers and most of the salaries for these schools. Such men as C. C. Peters, G. H. Sukkau, H. C. Born, H. W. Dueck, Frank Peters, H. P. Neufeldt,

* For a more complete record of all Bible Schools in South America sponsored by the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, see Appendix II of Dissertation.

Victor Toews and John Wall significantly contributed to this ministry. No doubt there were others who served equally well.

Attempts were made to establish theological institutes in several places to offer more training for potential church leaders. This proliferation proved impractical and uneconomical, making the need for one Bible institute for the whole of the South American Conference imperative. The South American Conference passed a resolution in 1958 "that the Bible institute be supported by the Conference and be established in a Mennonite Brethren center in one of the countries."¹⁵ The school was built and began to operate in Curitiba, Brazil, in 1960, under the presidency of H. C. Born, who was followed by Frank Peters and Willy Jantz. At the South American Conference sessions in 1969, the cultural differences between Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries and their different needs, which had not appeared to be so significant when the school was established, had become more pronounced. Thus the Conference decided on two institutes, one in Curitiba, Brazil, and the other in Asunción, Paraguay, for churches in Paraguay and Uruguay.

The Association

The development of a basic program for biblical/theological education contributed to a scripturally-based theological orientation within the churches of the Association and contributed to the emergence of good leadership. Today these churches are completely self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.

Despite this, the churches have not grown significantly numerically. There are two basic reasons. First, they remained culturally distinct from their Brazilian surroundings, thus making it difficult for Brazilian converts to join them. Secondly, many of the members of these churches continued to migrate to Canada, Germany, and elsewhere. The total membership of all the churches in the Association increased from 823 in 1960 to 990 in 1969, or 167 members in nine years.

It should be noted, however, that these churches have

been quite active in missionary work. Practically every church started a work among the Portuguese-speaking neighbors, with the converts organized into Portuguese-speaking churches. The Association as a whole has also started several churches among the German nationals, particularly in the State of Santa Catarina.

THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH IN PARAGUAY

The Beginning

There were actually four immigration movements of Mennonites to Paraguay.

The first Mennonites left Canada seeking greater isolation and opportunity to preserve their faith. They came to Paraguay in 1927, settling the Menno Colony in the Chaco. This was known as the "green Hell" and considered unfit for settlement by white men. These early immigrants experienced the greatest hardships of all groups settling the Gran Chaco.

Later Mennonite immigrants included those who had received permission to leave Russia in 1929 and were unable to enter the U.S. or Canada. They came to the Chaco in 1930 with the assistance of the MCC, founding the Fernheim Colony not far from the Menno Colony. J.W. Fretz reports, "The total settlement was made over a two-year period in installments of eight separate groups, totalling 2,001 persons."¹⁶ The last of these arrived in April, 1932, having come through China to find a new home here.

A third group of Mennonite refugees came from Russia and Germany after World War II. The MCC again helped them find a new home in the Chaco, where they established the Neuland Colony. Others were settled in Volendam Colony in east Paraguay in the summer of 1947. Some of this latter group also went to Uruguay.

Finally some Mennonites seeking greater freedom for their religion came from Canada in 1948, settling in the Sommerfeld and Bergthal Colonies in East Paraguay.

The first and last movements of immigrants came to South America by choice, while the second and third came as refugees whom no other country would admit. But "for all the settlers, the early economic struggles were very difficult. Not least of all was this true among the settlers in the Chaco."¹⁷

For our purpose we will only give attention to the Fernheim, Neuland, and Volendam Colonies, since the others did not contain Mennonite Brethren. The Friesland Colony,

MENNONITE BRETHREN COME TO LATIN AMERICA



however, cannot be omitted because in its origin and life the Mennonite Brethren people were involved.

Many people in Fernheim became discouraged because of the gloomy economic conditions and wanted to relocate. Reasons given were that they wanted to go where there was more rain and less wind; where they could have fruit and vegetable gardens; where they would be closer to the railroad; where they could raise wheat as they had done in Europe; and where the locusts did not continually threaten their crops. Furthermore, there was considerable dissatisfaction because of what was felt to be excessive regulation on the part of colony officials.¹⁸

In 1933 the feelings ran so high that a delegation was sent by the colony to explore other opportunities for settlements in Paraguay. This delegation, consisting of Gerhard Isaac and Kornelius Langeman, went to Asunción, and received permission to explore east Paraguay. Yet upon their return nothing happened. It was known that MCC did not favor relocation, in part because MCC hoped to sell the land it had acquired to settlers. Moreover, it sought to unite the group in order to better overcome economic adversities. Even more serious was the fact that to move out of the Chaco meant the loss of the privilege of being exempt from military duty.

Discontent came to a head in 1937. In spite of MCC aid to Fernheim and reduction in land prices and interest rates, and despite the advice of Orie Miller and P. C. Hiebert, the MCC representatives visiting the Fernheim Colony, 144 families comprising a total of 748 individuals moved to east Paraguay to begin Friesland Colony. Their dreams of improvement were not realized, however, for in succeeding years the new colony did not prosper more than the colonies which remained in the Chaco.*

Organization of Churches in Paraguay

Church life in Paraguay was different from the pattern elsewhere. In the first place, each colony was in a way a

* For more details on location of colonies see Map 2, p. 37.

state within a state, with self-government in all internal affairs. Therefore all residents of a given colony interacted freely in areas of life where a common goal was at stake. This included local government, schools, medical necessities, and the colony's economic life.

This carried over into church life. Taking the Fernheim Colony as an example, we note that there were three different denominations represented: General Conference Mennonite Church, Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, and Mennonite Brethren Church. Members of these different denominations did not settle in separate villages, but were scattered throughout the 21 villages of the colony.

Distances between villages were sometimes large. Landskrone in Fernheim, for instance, was 29 kilometers from Filadelfia, the capital of the colony. Valencia was another 23 kilometers southwest from Blumenthal, or a total of 52 kilometers from Filadelfia. Since transportation using horses was slow, participation in the regular church life proved difficult.

Additionally, residents in the colony had gone through such hardships together during war and refugee years that they had developed a strong feeling of community, and this was reflected in church activities.

As a result, most church activities involved all residents of a village or cluster of villages in close geographic proximity. The different denominations would have separate meetings usually called "Hauptversammlung" or Denominational Main Meeting, once a month. At these "Hauptversammlungen," each denomination took care of internal business, established and cultivated relations with sister churches in other colonies and foreign lands, and usually observed the Lord's supper.

At local interdenominational meetings all residents of colonies would have their Sunday schools, Bible studies, women's meetings, youth gatherings, evangelism meetings, and other activities. This mixture of denominational emphasis at the "Hauptversammlung" and spirit of ecumenicity in each colony shaped the life of the church.

We now consider the Mennonite Brethren churches in the colonies.

Fernheim Colony: The first group of immigrants arriving at Fernheim Colony on April 27, 1930, consisted of people from various Mennonite denominations in Russia. On June 9, 1930, nearly 60 brethren met in the village of Gnadenheim to discuss the founding of a Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay. They agreed to accept the guidelines of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia as a framework for the new Mennonite Brethren Church. Members of the church could be those who had brought a church letter with them from Russia, those who had witnesses present who could testify that they had been members of a Mennonite Brethren Church, and those who were willing to give a testimony and be admitted by the group on the basis of such testimony. Finally, the brethren agreed that communion would be available to believers of other denominations, even those who had experienced another mode of baptism.¹⁹

The difficulties in transportation created by distance and the need to strengthen the local church more effectively resulted in the decision on April 7, 1931, to have branch churches in various localities, with the main church in Filadelfia. Such local affiliated churches were established in the following places: Schoenwiese in the western part of Fernheim, with Rev. Gerhard Isaac as leader; Lichtfelde in the eastern part of Fernheim, with Rev. Henry Pauls as leader; and Orloff, later called Karlsruhe, in the north-eastern part of Fernheim, with Rev. John Schellenberg as leader.

Blumenthal, in the extreme southern part of Fernheim, was founded on October 4, 1960, after young couples moved into new villages provided by the colony for an expanding population. This church has not enjoyed the benefit of constant leadership by ordained ministers, although several came to serve effectively for a period of time, including Alvin Enns from Canada.

These branch churches did not disturb the interdenominational church life in the colonies, but met periodically to take care of local needs peculiar to the Mennonite Brethren Church. For the monthly "Hauptversammlung" all still went to the mother church in Filadelfia for communion and regulation of denominational affairs. The leaders of this

mother church were Isaak Braun (1930-1932), Gerhard Isaac (1932-1939), Gerhard Balzer (1939-1955), G. B. Giesbrecht (1955-1973) and presently Eric Giesbrecht (1973-).

German nationalism was strong in the colonies in the late 1930s and most of the 1940s, especially in the churches. Tensions and divisions resulted. This led the affiliated churches to break with the mother church. After the reconciling ministry of B.B. Janz in the late 1940s, these churches re-established brotherly relationships. Each in its locality continued the practice of conducting the monthly "Hauptversammlung." This they did in the spirit of unity and love, but more as independent churches of the same denomination than as a group of branch churches coming together for fellowship, communion and denominational concerns.

A number of Mennonite Brethren were among those who left the Fernheim Colony in 1937 to make a new start in the Friesland Colony. They included several ministers and deacons. As a result the church remaining in Fernheim found it expedient to combine the Schoenwiese and Lichtfelde churches to become one church in Filadelfia.

Friesland Colony: When this colony was settled in 1937 the Mennonite Brethren members met in the village of Grossweide to organize a church. One hundred and fifty-three registered as chartered members, with Rev. Kornelius Voth as leader. He served the church until his death in 1957. Besides carrying on its own program, this church participated actively in the church life of this colony, giving leadership in numerous ventures. Although the membership grew to 232 in the early 1950s, migration to North America and Asunción resulted in a decline to 144 in 1968.

Volendam Colony: When refugees from Europe arrived, those interested in establishing a Mennonite Brethren church met November, 1947, under a tree to seek God's direction. Those who wanted to become members gave a testimony of their salvation experience, baptism and current church affiliation. Fifty-six believers became charter members. Since there was no ministerial leadership present, this church became an affiliate of the Friesland Mennonite

Brethren Church.

At first, ministering brethren from Friesland traveled to Volendam once a month. Later this responsibility was given to Franz Janzen, a minister who had come from Europe a little later. The church became independent in 1951, and Janzen served as its leader until 1954, when he migrated to Canada. Leaders since then have been Adolf Reimer (1954-1962), Martin August (1962-1963), Heinrich Baerg (1965-1968), and Walter Epp (1968-).

The Volendam Colony experienced severe economic difficulties. As a result a constant stream of people left, some to Germany, but more to Canada. This made the work of the church difficult, with membership declining from a high of over 100 in 1949 to 92 in 1957, 69 in 1965, and 46 at the end of 1969. More recently the economy of the colony has gained new economic strength with the introduction of wheat, and the desire to migrate has declined. The church is now experiencing greater stability for the future.

Neuland Colony: The Mennonite Brethren Church in the Neuland Colony had its beginning before the colony was started in 1947. While a group of refugees in 1946 were waiting for an opportunity to leave Berlin, Wm. Loewen, a minister from Russia, called the Mennonite Brethren members together and registered them. On August 27, 1947, while still waiting to emigrate, this church baptized 20 persons. In February, 1947, this group, after a miraculous deliverance from Berlin, joined other refugee groups to make their way on the ship, the S.S. Volendam, to Buenos Aires, Argentina. While waiting here in the San Lorenzo camp, this newly formed church elected a deacon and baptized another 11 persons.

After arrival at the Neuland Colony in September, 1947, a majority of this church settled in the village of Gnadenthal. Another smaller group went to the village of Steinfeld, over 30 kilometers to the south. The rest of the members scattered to other villages. Since transportation was still limited, two centers were established, with Gnadenthal as the main church and Steinfeld as branch church. This called for a monthly "Hauptversammlung" in two places. Only occasionally did the total membership meet together.

This church included many families whose marriage partners had been separated during the war and refugee days. The resultant social problems included several cases of extra-marital activity. But with help from brethren who came from Fernheim and from North America, the church was able to reorientate itself on the basis of Scripture and become spiritually stronger.

At the time of the first "Hauptversammlung" 225 members were registered. The church held several baptisms, so membership increased to 260 by 1955. Up to 1957 this church had received 509 believers into its membership, 200 of them through baptism. But the economic growth of the colony was slow, and many left for Canada where they had friends or relatives. In January 6, 1959, the membership had dropped to 144 and in 1967 there were only 108.

Of the people who remained, more and more moved from Gnadenthal to Neu Halbstadt, the center of the colony. Consequently, the church building in that village was sold to the Chulupi Church in Yalve Sanga, the mission colony, and another building erected in Neu Halbstadt. Membership in Steinfeld also declined, so that church also was dissolved. Members joined in the services in the new building in the center of the colony.

Asunción: Through the years there had been an almost constant trickle of people from the various colonies to the cities, most of them to Asuncion. Some of these were businessmen, others sought better earning opportunities, while many were students. This brought these people out of the sheltered atmosphere of the colony and into the middle of an urban society. Members of the various Mennonite denominations, including Mennonite Brethren, needed spiritual fellowship, nurture and encouragement to be witnesses in their new environment.

Members of the Mennonite Brethren church were invited to gather in 1963 for the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Asunción. Twenty responded. In three years membership tripled, with 17 of them students. By 1967, Mennonite student population in Asuncion had reached 65, of which 16 were Mennonite Brethren members or children of Mennonite Brethren families.

Although the General Conference Mennonites formed a church even a little earlier than the Mennonite Brethren, these two interrelate here as effectively as the churches do in the colonies. They have a separate monthly "Hauptversammlung" and meet alone at some other occasions, but the rest of the church activity is carried on unitedly. The greatest emphasis in the church program is on youth work. For evangelistic outreach, both Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches in Asunción have stayed within ethnic limitations. They have had a significant witness to Spanish-speaking neighbors.

All of the Mennonite Brethren churches joined to become the Paraguayan Mennonite Brethren Conference in 1961. In 1964, total membership was 1,026. It dropped to 928 in 1967, rising to 1,028 in 1970.

These statistics indicate that ethnic boundaries did play a definite role in church growth. And in the Paraguayan setting, it will be some time before these ethnic boundaries will be broken down enough to incorporate others in these churches.

Aid to the Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay

Our purpose is not to study the material aid given to the churches in Paraguay, but rather to indicate spiritual nurture and missionary assistance. The ministries of the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the Board of Missions related to one another in Paraguay very much like they did in Brazil.

The MCC served the colonies as a whole, particularly in elementary and secondary education and teacher training. This educational ministry was vital to the development of the entire life of the colonies, but we must limit ourselves to a study of Mennonite Brethren churches, and these only as they relate to Mennonite Brethren missions in South America.

Aid for Bible Schools and Theological Institutes: Although some Bible instruction to young people had been given earlier, the first steps toward a regular Bible school came from a meeting of mission workers in Paraguay with the

Rev. A. E. Janzen when he visited the country in April, 1949. The workers asked "whether the mission work could be expanded to include the support of a Bible school to train the youth of the Mennonite settlements for the work,"²⁰ for more workers were urgently needed. This suggestion was discussed with the K. of K.,* which showed sufficient interest to warrant the following proposal from the mission:

1. Because the Bible school of Fernheim needs a room in which to instruct, the A.M.B. Mission is prepared to make a suitable building available for this purpose for the school year in 1949.
2. Upon the request of the K. of K., the A.M.B. Mission is prepared to permit missionary J. H. Franz to be the principal of the school for 1949 and to teach two hours a day at the expense of the mission.
3. The Mission believes that the K. of K. should assume responsibility for the remuneration of the other teachers.
4. If the K. of K. is prepared to give the responsibility for the future of the Fernheim Bible School over to the Mission, the Mission is willing to incorporate the Bible School into its missionary program and place it under the administration of the Board of Foreign Missions, in conjunction with the cooperating committee of the Fernheim Mission Association and one representative of the Fernheim K. of K.
5. In order to do the Bible school work successfully in the future, the Mission plans: (a) To build a suitable building on the mission compound in Filadelfia, Fernheim; (b) Seek to implement a 4-year curriculum of 5 to 6 months a year; (c) Furthermore, A.M.B. Missions would want to engage a couple fulltime, i.e., 12 months a year, as principal of the Bible school; (d) Further plans and regulations for a solution of all other questions related to Bible school shall be placed into the hands of the administrative committee mentioned in point 4. above.

* Komitee fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten, which coordinated the church life of the different churches within the colony.

The Board of Missions in North America viewed these projections with favor and appointed Rev. and Mrs. Victor Toews for a fulltime ministry in the Bible school. The Bible school attracted 44 students in 1949, with a peak attendance of 102 in 1953. Rev. C.C. Peters had been sent first by the MCC and later by the Board of General Welfare to teach in the academy and teacher training school, but in his heart he yearned to participate in the Bible school. Peters saw in the Bible school a broader purpose than just preparing missionaries, believing its benefits would further the general spiritual nurture of the young people. The Board of Welfare intensified its interest in this institution and not only supplied teachers, but assumed general responsibility for a subsidy to operate the school. Teachers like C.C. Peters, G.H. Sukkau, H.C. Born and others from North America made significant contributions. However, when V. Toews returned to Canada in 1956 to teach in the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, the Board of Missions did not replace him.

The Friesland Mennonite Brethren Church also asked for a Bible school. Again the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations helped the church with teachers and subsidy. Rev. H.P. Neufeld from Canada was called in 1950 and the Lord gave him a significant ministry. This school attracted students from Volendam as well. Enrollment was 39 the first year, with enrollment at 43 in 1951.

After 1953 the attendance in both schools declined, until in 1961 the Fernheim school had only 37 students and Friesland only 8. It proved particularly difficult to enroll male students. By 1970 even the Fernheim school had only nine students.

Several factors may have contributed to a decline in student interest in the Bible school: 1. Since students no longer received a subsidy to cover expenses, it may have kept the poorer students from coming, while those who had funds preferred to study in schools where they could prepare for a profession; 2. General secularization of values as contacts with an urban society increased and the "have nots" began to taste prosperity; 3. The opening of the Bible Institute in Asuncion certainly was another factor.

This school started in February, 1957, in conjunction with the mission work for the Spanish-speaking people in that city. The purpose of this school is:

The Institute Biblico Asunción is a branch of the Mission work in Asunción. In this connection we think particularly of the preparation of workers for our mission churches. But we also believe that young people from our German-speaking churches can receive a good preparation here. In this year 4 teachers offer instruction. There are 3 courses of 8 months each. This year we have 16 students in this institution, 4 of them from the German-speaking and 12 from the Spanish-speaking churches.²¹

In 1968, the Paraguayan Conference requested that the South American Mennonite Brethren Conference turn the South American Theological Institute located in Curitiba, Brazil, over to the churches of Brazil, and that the Bible Institute in Asunción be recognized as the institution for the Spanish-speaking countries, notably for Paraguay and Uruguay. The Conference agreed to this request in its 1969 session.

In 1966 the Board of Missions had authorized that subsidy to Bible institutes in South America be proportioned to both the school in Curitiba and the school in Asunción. In line with Conference action, the Asunción Bible Institute was recognized by the Board as the school for Paraguay and Uruguay. At the same time, the Bible school in Fernhelm reduced its course offerings to one year, focusing on preparing Sunday school teachers instead of mission workers.

But had the Bible schools in the colonies served a meaningful purpose? The reactions are unanimously positive. In 1966 the report to the Conference stated: "The blessings of the Bible schools through the years for both students and teachers have been immeasurable. We believe that the churches have received the students back as more firmly grounded members."²²

In 1967 the Conference was told: "Most of the students assist actively in the work of the churches."²³ Of those who graduated in the earlier years, a large number went into the work of missions and the church. Later the preparation

for mission workers shifted more and more to Asunción. In all of the above, church aid in faculty and finances indeed played a significant role.

Special Short Term Ministries: The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations assisted the churches in Paraguay in a similar manner as in Brazil. At certain times and for special assignments, the Board did this through MCC. At other times, for a specific need in the Mennonite Brethren Church, the Board would do this direct and under its own auspices.

As we have already noted, Robert Seibel and C.N. Hiebert were sent to South America by MCC in the late 1940s for revival and evangelism. The ministry of C.C. Peters and Waldo Hiebert in the Fernheim Academy was significant to a people who did not have adequate teachers for young people. Later, C.C. Peters also entered into the ministry of the Bible school, while Wm. Schroeder from Canada taught for several years in the academy in Neuland. Gerhard Sukkau put most of his efforts into the promotion of Bible schools. He was succeeded by H.C. Born. Alvin Enns taught elementary school in Blumenthal and served that church. The evangelistic ministry of John A. Toews, Jr., and G.W. Peters proved a great blessing as they traveled through the various churches, conducting meetings. Almost always baptisms followed such evangelistic services.

The ministry of B.B. Janz in late 1947 and early 1948 was most timely for the Mennonite Brethren churches of Paraguay. German nationalism had made its appearance in the early 1930s through various visitors from Germany of Mennonite background. In 1933, the German Mennonite Youth Organization was formed, with teachers of the academy in Fernheim promoting this movement. Dr. Fritz Kliever, a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church, returned from studies in Germany in June, 1939, and with the support of his father-in-law, Julius Legiehn, also a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church and Oberschulze of the Fernheim Colony at the time, promoted German nationalism.²⁴ Membership for the "Deutschen Volksbund" was actively solicited, and churches and ministers were expected to support the movement.

German nationalism, however, militated against the historic non-resistant doctrine of all Mennonites. The Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church appears to have been the first to denounce, in writing, the influence of German nationalism upon the church and declare that they as a church would not become involved. In 1942, Rev. G. Balzer, leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church, made a similar statement to his church, saying that as leader he could no longer condone German nationalism. Supporters, on the other hand, received strong letters of encouragement for the movement from Dr. B.H. Unruh in Germany.²⁵

German nationalism appealed to many of the Mennonite settlers for several reasons: 1. German was their language and they carried a consciousness of being German ethnically; 2. Germany had sheltered them during refugee days and aided them in their move to a new home; 3. Up to this time the Mennonites had not made any contact with their Mennonite Brethren in North America and had no prospect of help from any other source; 4. B.H. Unruh had been their champion during the refugee days in Germany and personal counselor to many; 5. The Mennonites had not as yet developed loyalties to their new homeland, nor did they have feelings of affinity to any of the ethnic people surrounding them.

The tensions between the non-resistant group and those who favored German nationalism intensified so much that on March 11, 1944, open conflict erupted in the colony. It had far-reaching consequences for the hitherto united residents of the community. Opposing factions in the Mennonite Brethren Church became so strong that the church in Filadelfia split into three independent churches, while the Friesland church was also threatened with disintegration.

Into such an atmosphere in Paraguay the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations sent Rev. B.B. Janz from Canada. His assignment was to rescue the Mennonite Brethren churches and save the mission outreach. In his ministry Janz stressed the following: 1. That the redemptive relationship in Christ superceded all ethnic limitations and loyalties; 2. That the unity of the body of Christ made any divisiveness sin; 3. That sin which resulted in public

expressions of loyalties to any other cause than the Gospel called for public repentance, confession, and a plea for forgiveness.²⁶

The above emphasis, coupled with the calm and tactful approach of Janz, had a profound effect upon the colonies as a whole, and upon the Mennonite Brethren Church in particular. The strong support for German nationalism evaporated, and after that date we do not read of its activities anymore. In the Mennonite Brethren Church of Filadelfia reconciliations took place and the church factions were reunited. In the Friesland Mennonite Brethren Church reconciliations likewise resulted in a new unity of the church, with the different parties combining to again form one body.

The impact of all these special ministries, though each was only of short duration, is indeed difficult to measure. But it is obvious that without them the course of the Mennonite Brethren Church and its mission in Paraguay would have been a different one. Such ministries did bring revival and unity into the ranks of the church and made it a better tool for God to be used in missions.

Missions to the Lepers: MCC had carried on a ministry to the lepers of Paraguay for many years, with its main center of activity at Kilometer 81 on the road leading from Asunción to Brazil. This disease was so widespread in Paraguay that clinics had to be opened in several communities. In order not to be socially ostracized, leprosy people hesitated to reveal their illness. Consequently, many besides those who were registered had to be found before they could be treated.

There seemed to be a special need in and around San Estanislao, close to the Friesland Colony. As a result, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations encouraged the Friesland church to begin a work here, which the Board would be willing to subsidize. The church appointed Arndt Funk, who had received some training in treating leprosy while working at Kilometer 81, and the work began in September, 1959. Within one year 51 patients received regular visits from A. Funk, who sacrificially carried on the work. The need to expand the ministry called for better

transportation, so the youth of Mennonite Brethren churches in North America provided a vehicle for the work. Despite Funk's efforts to also distribute Christian literature, i.e. tracts and testaments, the spiritual results were few.

Improved road conditions made communication from Kilometer 81 to these places more feasible. As a result, Dr. John Schmidt, who was directing the MCC work at Kilometer 81, declared himself ready to incorporate this work in his program. The Board of Missions and Services thus moved to amalgamate the work in San Estanislao with the work of Kilometer 81, terminating its involvement in this project as of December 31, 1969.

It is difficult to assess the spiritual achievements here, except that the very nature of the work and the conditions of the people treated made visible results difficult to assess.

THE MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH IN URUGUAY

On October 7, 1948, the "Volendam" left Europe with 1578 Mennonite refugees. On board ship were 500 Danzig Mennonite, 200 from Lemberg, and 82 who had originally come from central Poland, near Warsaw. Of the first three groups, 751 came to Montevideo on October 27, 1948.²⁷ Since the land on which they were to be settled was not immediately available, these refugees were temporarily placed into camps at Arapey and Colonia.

The Beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church

The majority of the refugees were from the Mennonite Church, but some from Poland were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church. While still aboard ship those interested in forming a Mennonite Brethren church were invited to a meeting. Eighteen people met, agreeing to form a Mennonite Brethren church. Tobiath Foth was elected as leader and minister of the group.

Shortly after the group's arrival in Uruguay, the Mennonite Brethren conducted meetings in the refugee camps. A number accepted Christ as Saviour and requested baptism. Since Foth was not ordained and thus not authorized to perform the ordinance, a visit by C. C. Peters and R. C. Seibel proved most timely. These men conducted evangelistic services in the camp and several more accepted Christ. On December 14, 1949, C. C. Peters conducted the first Mennonite Brethren baptismal service in Uruguay. Now there were a total of 34 members in the Mennonite Brethren group. On February 12, 1950, Gerhard Balzer and Heinrich Friesen from Paraguay visited this church at their camp. They ordained Tobiath Foth to the ministry and also received the church into the South American District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Since Uruguay did not provide land in a large enough complex to settle all of the group in one location, they were settled in colonies from 75 to 400 kilometers apart. As a result the Mennonite Brethren had to settle in different colonies, including El Ombu Colony, Gartental Colony, in

Colonia, Buschental, Paysandu, and Montevideo. The latter were largely young people who had come to the city to help subsidize the pioneer farming of their parents.

These groups needed periodic ministerial visits to strengthen the faith of believers and reach unbelievers. The North American Mennonite Brethren Church helped financially to make these itinerant ministries possible.

The great distances also made it more and more difficult to attend church business meetings regularly. So an annual spiritual life conference was begun in 1957 in connection with the business meeting, becoming the source of both blessings and spiritual renewal.

The need for church buildings for the various groups again brought help from North America. A house was rented in Montevideo in 1953. This served as a home for many of the young people who worked in the city. In addition to housing the houseparents, it also provided a hall for church services. An even more suitable building was purchased with North American aid in September, 1954. With similar help a church was built in El Ombu in February, 1956, and also in Gartental in the same year. In Colonia a residence was remodeled in November, 1958, to provide a large enough room for the meetings of the small group located there.

During the Spiritual Life Conferences the delegates repeatedly asked, "When can a Mennonite Brethren group become an independent church?" After lengthy discussion, the brethren agreed that it was cumbersome to have the scattered groups all belong to one church. So in December, 1963, they decided to have three independent churches. One was to be in Montevideo, with an affiliate in Colonia. Another was organized in Sarandi, a colony established when most of the Mennonite Brethren Church group left El Ombu to find better economic opportunities. The third was located in Gartental, with an affiliate in El Ombu, and consisted of those few Mennonite Brethren who had stayed there when the rest left for Sarandi. The groups at Paysandu and Buschental disappeared as a result of migration. The membership at this time was as follows: Montevideo and Colonia 25, Sarandi 29, Gartental and El Ombu 24, making a total of 78.²⁸

Church Aid

The groups outside of Montevideo that developed into independent churches experienced a great shortage of ministers. This was particularly true after Peter Loewen, K. Funk, and Frank Janzen, all ministers, left for Canada. The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations set out to meet this need by sending ministers to encourage the believers and to evangelize. In addition to those mentioned earlier, Frank Peters, F. C. Peters, and John A. Toews, Jr., came to minister to them for short periods of time. The John Walls, a Bible school teacher from Canada, served them from 1957 to 1961, and the J. P. Neufelds, a pastor from Winnipeg, from 1962 to 1967.

These brethren, who lived in Montevideo, and whose ministry in that city we want to consider separately, visited these rural groups and served as itinerant pastors to the scattered Mennonite Brethren. They ministered at the annual Spiritual Life Conferences and provided pastoral care for individuals. Daniel Wirsche continued this spiritual ministry after 1968 and conducted special youth retreats. A revival broke out among the young people in the summer of 1969, and this spirit radiated back into the churches.²⁹

In addition to a spiritual ministry, these colonies needed economic help repeatedly, particularly the Sarandi group. Sizable loans were granted to them from North America in addition to other material help. To this day the Mennonite Brethren groups, especially the one in Sarandi, continue to experience great economic difficulties. Though MCC and other agencies have tried to help, this has had little permanent effect.

A number of young people from the Mennonite Brethren Church gravitated to the city because of earning opportunities. The churches in the colonies and in Montevideo were deeply concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of these young people. They had come from a rural background and had been plunged into an urban setting and into an entirely new culture.

The John Walls came to Uruguay to be houseparents to the Mennonite young people in the city, to visit the different

Mennonite Brethren groups in Uruguay, and to teach in the Bible school held in the home. For three months every year they left to teach in the Bible school in Bagé, Brazil.³⁰

Before the Walls returned to Canada in 1961 a general review of the work in Uruguay was made, assisted by Waldo Hiebert and J. B. Toews, who visited the field at the time. Already then there seemed to be a movement of young people back to the colonies. This trend became stronger as time went on. Thus it was decided to discontinue the home for young people. Instead, it was recommended that a couple with missionary vision for the large German-speaking community, who could also provide pastoral leadership for the church, should be secured. The center would have to be more a church center than a lodging home. Yet to achieve this, it was believed necessary to sell the present building and secure a more suitable location and building.³¹

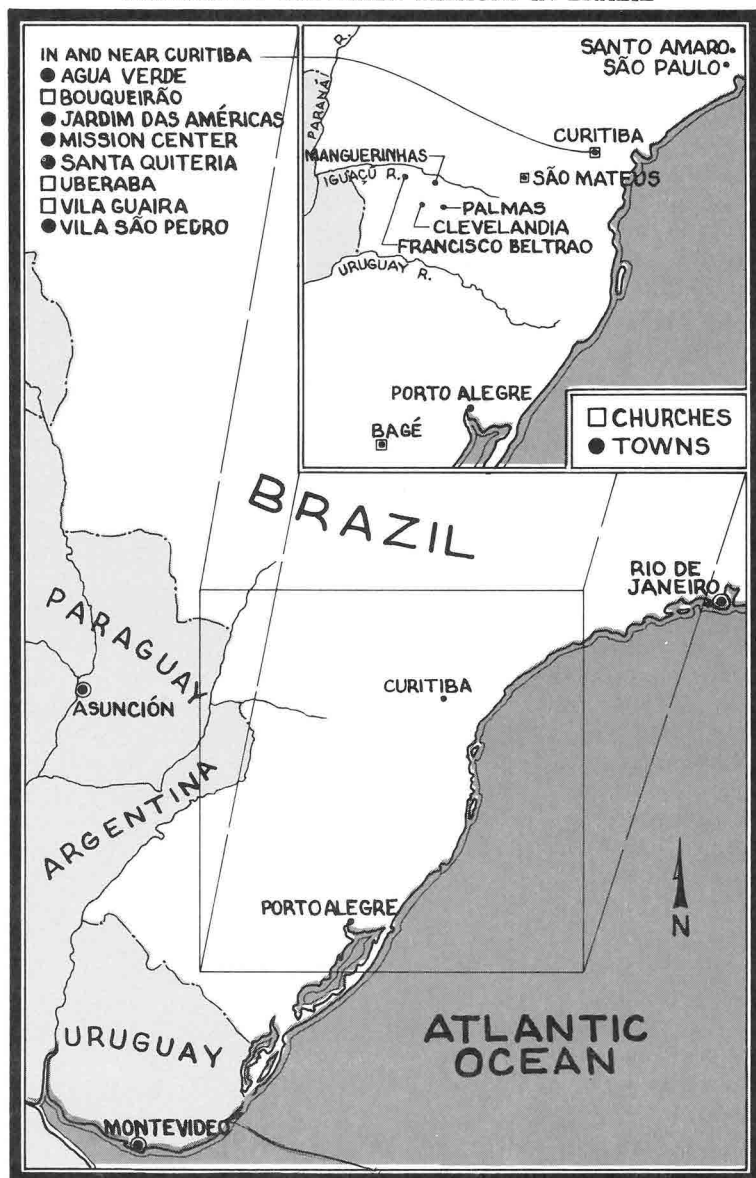
When Rev. J. P. Neufeld arrived in 1962, he sent back a report recommending relocation of the Mennonite Brethren center, a strong missionary outreach, and a wide gospel witness by means of radio, releasing the German program of the Gospel Light Hour. This change in emphasis caused the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations to ask seriously whether such activity was still within their mandate or whether the work should be turned over to the Board of Missions.

Meanwhile, the brethren in Montevideo met with J. P. Neufeld and recommended that the new missionary work be relocated to the Peñarol area of the city. During an evangelistic campaign many from the Peñarol community had attended the services despite the distance, showing real interest in the Gospel.

In March of 1963, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations wrestled with the issues involved. The Board learned that the Board of Missions had no intention of entering Uruguay. Thus this Board felt constrained to accept the recommendation to move the center to Peñarol.³² The brethren in Uruguay acted with dispatch and built a chapel with some Sunday school rooms, plus a small residence for the pastor. These facilities were dedicated on Feb. 5, 1967, while the J. P. Neufelds were still on the field.

Meanwhile, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations officially approached the Board of Missions in 1964 with the request to accept the work in Uruguay, since a good beginning had been made for missions and the large German population was ready for the Gospel. These negotiations continued until the two Boards, Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and Board of Missions, merged in 1966. The new Board, known as Board of Missions and Services, or BOMAS, initiated more specific missionary activity.

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS IN BRAZIL



2

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS IN BRAZIL

THE SETTING

Brazil, with its 3,288,000 square miles, is the giant of Latin America. Its borders touch every South American Republic except Chile and Ecuador. Except for some mountainous areas on the eastern and southern coastline, its vast tableland slopes from the west down to the Atlantic Ocean. This is served by a network of 27,000 miles of navigable rivers, headed by the mighty Amazon. With only 35,000,000 acres devoted to agriculture, the country is working toward industrial self-sufficiency for its population of about 98,400,000 people. Its natural resources are ample to achieve this goal, but industry and agriculture will need to be kept in proper balance.

Religiously, Brazil is 95% Roman Catholic. Yet although Protestants number only 4,071,643, their number is growing rapidly. Spiritism as a movement is also gaining momentum, while various forms of animism continue among isolated Indian tribes.

The first successful Protestant mission emerged in Brazil with the arrival of Dr. Robert Reid Kalley in 1855. His medical ministry earned for him the friendship of influential people and resulted in government protection for him when priests and mobs threatened him and his work. As a result many denominational missions came to Brazil, including Presbyterian, American Methodists, Southern Baptists, Swedish Pentecostals, and Assemblies of God. Interdenominational missions arrived at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the largest influx after World War I and again after World War II. Most successful have been the Pentecostals, though the Baptists have also had outstanding results.

OUTREACH of MENNONITE BRETHREN SETTLERS

Mennonite Brethren missionary work among Brazilian nationals was first begun by the Board of Missions and Services. For the sake of continuity, however, we shall recount first the outreach by the members of the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren churches of the Association in Brazil. Although at the beginning they were preoccupied with making a livelihood, they did initiate some mission work.

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AMONG GERMAN ETHNIC GROUPS

The State of Santa Catarina, in which the Mennonites had originally settled in the Krauel, had large settlements of people with German origins. Since most had settled in clusters, largely in isolated communities, many had retained their language and also their cultural traits. The original contact with the Mennonites during pioneer settlement days served as a natural bridge to the communication of the Gospel.

At Saltobach, for example, only one family of Mennonite Brethren had remained. Church activity had to be discontinued. But the growing churches in and around Curitiba in the State of Parana, and the church in Colonia Nova, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, did not forget them. The missions committee of the Association reported in 1965 that ministers had been sent to conduct special meetings in Blumenau, Encano do Norte, Krauel, and Saltobach. Young people from Curitiba and Bagé helped to conduct vacation Bible schools in the Krauel, particularly in such places as Katangara, Witmarsum, Anu, Mareco, Krauel and Saltobach.

At the 1969 session of the Association, the new church at Witmarsum, Santa Catarina, as well as the new church of Encano do Norte, both fruits of mission efforts, were received into the Association. In the 1970 sessions, the Missions Committee reported several new places where work was being done. They included Massaranduba, Anu, Wunderwald, Aurora, and Mareco. At the same session of the Association the delegates also noted that in coopera-

tion with BOMAS of North America, and under the leadership of missionary David Nightingale, a new work in Joinville had registered encouraging results.

In 1972 the Association, with assistance from BOMAS, launched a special "Thrust Evangelism" effort among these German nationals. A special team for this purpose was organized. Four couples and two single ladies embarked on a ministry of music, visitation, tract distribution, and evangelistic crusades in various settlements.

During the summer of 1973, this evangelistic force was further reinforced when BOMAS sent Jacob J. Toews to serve as evangelist. In the nine crusades held that summer, the response from the people was above expectation. Crusades were conducted in Taio, Presidente Getulio, and Rio de Sul, where no Mennonite Brethren mission churches existed. After the crusades the prospects of starting a church in each of these places looked promising.

This left the team with the heavy responsibility of "follow-through," the nurture of young Christians in their new faith. These believers were to augment the already existing missionary churches among the German nationals in the State of Santa Catarina.

The statistical growth of these churches during the five years prior to this effort is as follows:¹

	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
Saltobach	17	22	20	17	17
Blumenau	43	46	42	48	47
Joinville	--	--	--	12	16
Witmarsum	30	30	38	38	41
Encano	17	17	12	11	11
Aurora	--	--	19	24	23
Massaranduba	--	--	--	--	9
Totals	107	115	131	160	164

Significantly, the radio station HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, exerted a strong influence upon the German population in Santa Catarina State during this time. Its German Department served as a bridge across which the Gospel could advance. As a result, scores of people responded to the evangelistic appeal and made a commitment to Christ. David Nightingale, who had directed the German Department at HCJB in earlier years, enjoyed the added advantage of being known by many as their radio minister.

MISSION ACTIVITY AMONG BRAZILIAN NATIONALS

Minutes of the Association do not record much activity among Brazilian nationals. This may be because the work was done largely by individuals or individual local churches. Again it may be because the churches resulting from this effort associated more with those consisting of Brazilian nationals in Curitiba and the interior of Brazil started by BOMAS missionaries from North America. Nevertheless, the work was significant and fruitful.

Things changed with the founding of the Portuguese-speaking Brazilian Mennonite Brethren Church at Vila Guaira. Now members from Association churches were involved. Peter Hamm writes:

Another field is in and around Curitiba, where Br. Heinrich Schmidt has been engaged by the church and is supported by them. Quite a number of young brethren assist him in this work. What a joy when we had baptismal service here a few days ago in which six precious souls testified that they had received forgiveness of sin and now followed the command of the Lord to be baptized. The baptismal message, the baptism itself, the reception into the church and communion message were all performed by the young brethren in the Brazilian language.²

The Jardim Urano Portuguese-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church was started by the Sunday school and young people of the German-speaking Xaxim Mennonite Brethren Church. By 1973 it had become independent, with a fulltime pastor serving a church of 93 members. Assisted by the

Xaxim congregation, this church established five outstations by 1973, some of which are rapidly moving toward independent status.

The second Boqueirão Portuguese-speaking church was, in turn, started by the German-speaking Boqueirão Mennonite Brethren Church. By 1973 it had a membership of 98, with three outstations, some of which also promise to become independent churches soon.

The German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church of the Witmarsum Colony, Parana, sponsored the beginning of a Portuguese-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church in the town of Campo Largo. This reported 35 members in 1973. The German-speaking church at Colonia Nova also sponsored two Portuguese-speaking churches. One of them, known as the Second Mennonite Brethren Church, Bagé, is located in the rural Apolo area about six kilometers from Colonia Nova itself. It had a membership of 32 in 1973.³

Although the above report is regrettably incomplete, it does indicate an active concern among German-speaking Mennonite Brethren for the salvation of their Portuguese-speaking neighbors. This, combined with assistance from North America, helped to develop a greater missionary consciousness within the membership of the Association. Thus reports on the growth of the Portuguese mission work in Brazil need to emphasize that half of the newly-started Portuguese-speaking churches must be credited to the churches of "the German Conference, known as the 'Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches.' It, too, has been active in evangelism among the Portuguese people."

THE ASSIST FROM NORTH AMERICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN

CHILDREN'S HOMES

The Board of Missions and Services' initial thrust into Brazil was an orphanage. We reported earlier how the Unruhs came to Brazil without sponsorship to minister to the German colonists. When hindered, they served with the Salvation Army until the door opened to the German

Mennonite Brethren churches.

While working with the Salvation Army the Unruhs became aware that Brazil had an unusually high number of children either born out of wedlock, forsaken by parents, or victims of broken homes. Thus they wanted to start a home for such children in addition to their work with the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The Unruhs returned to North America and presented their request to BOMAS. After deliberation and prayer, BOMAS recommended to the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church that (a) Brazil be accepted as a mission field; that (b) the J.D. Unruhs be accepted as regular missionaries to begin the work; and that (c) the Board be authorized to work out a plan on the basis of which the work in Brazil would operate.⁴ The Conference accepted these recommendations on November 27, 1945.

The Unruhs returned to Brazil with the following instructions from BOMAS: To seek the involvement of local Mennonite Brethren churches in the work of the home; and, in view of the fact that a direct missionary appeal to the Roman Catholic masses in Brazil was difficult at the time, they extend a witness for the Gospel to the children. Through the children and contacts gained thereby, they were to reach out to parents and other people in Brazilian society.

The Unruhs immediately initiated action to carry out these objectives of BOMAS. They arranged for direct representation from the Association churches on the board of the home. Elder Jacob Huebert and the Rev. Peter Hamm participated in the establishment and opening of the home. A 50-acre tract of land, about seven miles from the city of Curitiba, was acquired for \$16,000. This proximity to the city would provide the opportunities for making contacts with the people. New buildings were erected and on December 17, 1947, the home opened, with nine children as its residents.⁵

Yet this was only the beginning.

"Nobody knew how much work this home was going to be. Many children came badly disturbed by parental rejection, from broken homes, or from no homes. They were in need of love and emotional security. Spiritual results in these

lives seemingly correlate with the satisfaction of these needs," indicates a report in the 1966 General Conference Yearbook. "The workers fed them, clothed them, taught them to read and farm, told them of God's love."⁶

Such a program called for careful planning of every detail in the life of the institution as a whole, as well as for every worker and child. Great emphasis was placed on staff and child relationships, seeking to establish a warm Christian atmosphere. To meet the educational needs of the children, an elementary school program was soon begun. In 1957, a high school was started. These schools also attracted many children from the surrounding areas, greatly increasing the number of meaningful contacts with the people of the community. But, in order not to become over-involved in institutionalism, BOMAS negotiated the transfer of the high school, named Erasmo Braga, to the Association in 1969.

Because of ill health the J.D. Unruhs were forced to return to North America in October of 1948. The newly-arrived missionary, Linda Banman, had to assume the administrative responsibilities until the Erven Thiesens arrived in November, 1950. For twelve years the Thiesens served faithfully, erecting new buildings and expanding the farm operation.

The Kenneth Gerbrandts from California arrived in 1958 to assist the Thiesens so they could gain more freedom for a ministry in evangelism and church planting. The Gerbrandts energetically carried on the work of the home until December, 1966, when the Missionary Administrative Committee passed a resolution to discontinue the ministry of the home to concentrate more specifically on evangelism, church planting, and theological education. Misunderstanding between the missionaries and government officials also was another reason for the action.

The contribution of the home to Mennonite Brethren missions in Brazil must not be underestimated. The home made it easier for missionaries to enter Brazil. The administrators of the home played a leading role in early missionary expansion and church planting. The Unruhs also assisted the German-speaking churches. As soon as

Miss Banman was released from responsibilities in the home, she became involved in the starting of a number of churches. Concerning Erven Thiesen we read that he was

not content to limit his work only to the care and training of the children. He felt compelled to proclaim the Gospel. Since there were hardly any people in the proximity of the orphanage (in early 1950), he would take the pickup early each Sunday morning, take with him a few children and a record player with a loud-speaker, and drive to the suburb of Vila Guaira, a distance of 10 km., and conduct Sunday school on a vacant lot. Since he did not know the language, he invited others to do the speaking. Out of this work one of the first Portuguese Mennonite Brethren Churches came into being.⁷

A number of German-speaking Brazilians received special preparation at the home for a later ministry. After Henry Schmidt was saved, for example, he came to work at the home. He became involved in evangelism and quickly assumed responsibility for the church work at Vila Guaira. When he left, Franz Heinrichs took over, who in turn was succeeded by Willy Goertz. The latter was sponsored by the German-speaking Vila Guaira Church.* Henry Friesen also came to the home to work and received spiritual motivation here to leave this task and go to Colonia Nova to start the Portuguese church at Apolo. It is not an overstatement to say that most of the Christian workers in Brazil up to 1962 received much of their inspiration and motivation for their missionary task in the home.

* The background for the involvement of the Vila Guaira German Church in this Portuguese work may be significant. A settlement of German M.B. families in Clevelandia who remained there had a burden for their neighbors. The German churches near Curitiba, however, found it difficult to support the work there because of distance. Negotiations with missionaries resulted in an exchange where the mission assumed responsibility for Clevelandia, and the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church in turn accepted the Portuguese-speaking work as their task. (Personal interview with Erven Thiesen, September, 1973.)

We must also note the contribution the home made to the children who benefited from the care and training offered. Henry Esau sums it up in this way: "Of the children in the home, some have married pastors, some are real witnesses among their own people. Lar das Crianças was the first to make an outreach into the interior and help to establish the churches."⁸ This was true particularly of those who stayed in the home until their eighteenth birthday.

The added contacts which the home provided for missionary opportunities are both difficult to number and to evaluate. Whether or not the home should have been closed may be debated, but its value while in operation is beyond dispute.

THE STRATEGY OF CHURCH PLANTING

From its beginning, BOMAS had given high priority to evangelism and church planting. This priority in the case of Brazil was clearly enunciated in 1960 in a Five Year Plan for Brazil.⁹ This clearly states that all institutional work shall remain at a status quo and be consolidated wherever possible, with maximum effort concentrated on finding and penetrating suitable population centers with evangelism and church planting.

Field plans were made accordingly. The Erven Thiesens returned from furlough in 1958 and gave priority to church planting. Peter Huebert from Curitiba, who had worked for the mission since 1952, used his furlough year to get more training in evangelism and church planting. Special trips were made into the interior of Parana State to determine where an evangelistic work should be started. These efforts resulted in the founding of several churches. We can report on the beginning of only a few of such churches.

São Mateus: In July, 1959, several workers, including Erven Thiesens and Linda Banman, conducted a vacation Bible school in São Mateus, a town with about 6,000 residents and another 6,000 in the surrounding area. Evening evangelistic meetings were well attended and some people responded to the Gospel. Such results were indeed amazing considering that spiritism was widespread in the community

and that the tavern was the center of attraction.

Miss Banman returned to São Mateus on February 1, 1960, and temporarily moved in with the George Ulbrechts, who later became her first converts. Peter Hueberts came to São Mateus in August, 1960, and moved into a house purchased by the mission. They served the people who had already accepted Christ and sought to reach others.

A church was organized in December, 1960. This church soon purchased a building site for a building.

During the three and a half years the Hueberts ministered in São Mateus, they had the joy of seeing over 60 conversions and conducting three baptisms. In 1968, the number of baptized believers was 49, while Sunday school attendance had reached 36.

Clevelandia: In the early 1950s some German Mennonite families settled in Clevelandia, a town with a population of about 3,000, plus another 3,000 in the suburbs. In connection with their sale of eggs and butter, these Mennonites distributed gospel tracts. The ranchers in this area, however, insisted that their herds run wild, a practice which destroyed the crops of the ambitious Mennonite farmers. This became one of the major factors for the dissolution of the colony. Only two families, the Peter Friesens and the Rev. and Mrs. Henry Froese, stayed. The latter felt particularly burdened for the community and prayed for some evangelistic work to begin again. In November, 1960, Linda Banman came as an answer to that prayer.

A large house acquired by the mission was remodeled to provide both space for services and a residence. In it Rev. Froese soon had a growing adult Bible class, even though he did not know the Portuguese very well. Helen Penner, a nurse, also came to assist in the Sunday school. By the end of 1962, some 62 people attended. Several evangelistic campaigns were conducted during 1961 and 1962, with encouraging results. Rev. and Mrs. Walter Rempel moved here in 1962 to serve the church and community. In 1968, there were 51 members and 53 Sunday school pupils in this church.

In similar fashion, several more churches were started in the interior, particularly in Palmas and Francisco

Beltrao. Yet churches were also started in places other than the interior.

Uberaba: The Uberaba Church emerged from the work of the children in the home. The first missionary church was located right in the neighborhood. Until the early 1960s it benefited greatly from the ministry of several staff members, notably Erven Thiesen, Linda Banman, and Peter Huebert. As a result it was the first Portuguese Mennonite Brethren Church to become indigenous, something that helped it to grow rapidly in the expanding suburb surrounding it.¹⁰

In 1958 the Sunday school reached an attendance of close to 250, with membership climbing to 96. In 1966, there were 88 members, with 160 in Sunday school, and in 1968, it recorded 57 members and 100 in Sunday school. This decline undoubtedly reflects the decreasing operation of the home for children, since many workers who were members of the church had to find employment elsewhere. The fact that missionaries later replaced national workers in this church may also have contributed to its decline.

São Paulo: Much discussion and debate by Board, missionaries, and others preceded the beginning of missionary work in São Paulo. Some pointed out that the cost of living in São Paulo was about double that in Rio de Janeiro. Others felt that the work in Curitiba needed to mature more before a new work could be started in a distant city. Still others saw in São Paulo, one of the fastest growing cities of the world, with a population of over eight million, an unparalleled missionary opportunity. Even after work started in that city missionaries debated whether strategy required the building of a stronger church first before starting new churches, or whether they should explore the potential of beginning a church out of several of the home Bible study groups.

The work in São Paulo was started by missionary James Wiebe in 1964, with concentration in the Santa Amaro area. When he left for his furlough in 1966, Victor Arndt assumed responsibility. The first baptism in Santa Amaro was in December, 1966, and by 1969 there was a membership of 22, of which 6 had transferred from other Mennonite Brethren

churches. When the Wiebes returned in 1967, they set out to establish a new group in Camp Belo, another suburb of São Paulo. In 1968 they had no members, but could record a Sunday school attendance of 14. Not until March 28, 1971, were the Wiebes privileged to baptize their first three candidates.¹¹

All these church planting efforts, together with those by the German-speaking churches, resulted in a total of 15 organized churches in 1973, with a membership of 758 and a Sunday school attendance of 1,221. In addition, there were about 14 outstations and preaching points.

It is difficult to understand the proliferation of church planting. For in Brazil there are small struggling churches in São Paulo, Curitiba, the interior of Parana State and also in Joinville. Such geographic scattering is in contrast to the concentrated church planting strategy within one city which has been employed by Mennonite Brethren missions with gratifying results in Cali, Colombia, and Osaka, Japan, for instance. The responsibility for the lack of concentration must, no doubt, be shared by BOMAS as well as the missionaries.

THE CONVENTION, A RESULT OF CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY

Ever since 1960 the new Portuguese-speaking Mennonite Brethren churches had gathered each year for a Bible and missionary conference. As early as 1962 discussion began to focus on the need for a convention. The issue became more urgent as the number of churches increased. The leading brethren of the Portuguese-speaking Mennonite Brethren churches, most of whom were from the German-speaking background, met in January, 1966, to discuss the issue. At this meeting they agreed to form the "Convencas Brasileira das Igrejas Irmãos Menonitas" with the objectives of: guarding the unity of doctrine; promoting Christian fellowship among believers; and implementing evangelism as speedily as possible.

The first president of this Convention, Dietrich Reimer, worked diligently to create a sense of togetherness in the various churches and to promote interpersonal and inter-

church relations. Victor Arndt, the second president of the Convention, concentrated his efforts on harmonizing the working relationships within the Convention structure. The whole working force was integrated by making the chairman of each Convention committee a member of the Executive Board.

At the 1968 Convention, more specific goals were accepted: to double the number of churches within the next five years; to double the Sunday school enrollment in three years; each church shall have its own extension work within three years; any church receiving subsidy from BOMAS shall do so on a decreasing scale. Such developments are reflected in the report BOMAS received in May, 1970:

The Portuguese Convention is already in charge of the entire work. Their delegates meet for their annual Conferences and carry out the business of this Convention as an autonomous body. Missionaries attend these Conferences as visitors, and possibly as delegates. BOMAS subsidizes this Convention on a decreasing scale. Property that is not directly "mission property" as for example, the orphanage property, is being transferred to the Convention. Thus the responsibility for real estate, operations and projections are in the hands of the national Portuguese Convention. The Brazil Convention has a membership of 552. They meet in eleven places in their own church buildings and have their own full-time pastors. The total giving of these churches amounts to \$14,400 during the year of 1969.¹²

The Board, therefore, agreed:

That we negotiate with the Portuguese Convention the continued participation of BOMAS in arranging personnel and finances in the program of extension and evangelism among the Portuguese people,¹³

Under the auspices of this Convention and with help from BOMAS, a "Thrust Evangelism" effort was launched in 1972 to augment the work of evangelism and church planting. A special team consisting of at least four couples and as many single workers banded together to conduct crusades, distribute Christian literature, do house visitation, etc. This team has brought new zeal for evangelism to the Con-

vention itself, but is also going into new places to start churches.

AUXILIARY MINISTRIES IN BRAZIL

Institutionalism has been accused of robbing a mission of its cutting edge in the church planting effort. Sometimes the whole focus shifts from evangelism to work primarily in and with institutions. Missionaries can thus easily become administrators instead of evangelists, or exercise authority instead of radiating influence. We need to see what happened in Mennonite Brethren missions in Brazil.

The Home for Children

From evidence cited above, we may conclude that missionaries working in the home for children were also actively involved in evangelism. We have already noted how the Unruhs, Linda Banman, the Thiesens and others assumed a leading role in missionary expansion. Kenneth Gerbrandt, the last director of the home, reveals a similar concern. He writes:

With a variety of persons participating, we are happy to note that many of our young people are taking an active part in church activities. Three were baptized and accepted into the church. Several decisions were made and are being followed through to the step of baptism... Personal individual Bible study classes were given to all older children. The response was exceptionally good in almost all cases... We have had good opportunities to look into the spiritual phase of their lives and find that many are faithful in church attendance.¹⁴

Thus we can assert that the home could have become a deterrent to church planting, but actually it continued to hold good potential for evangelism until the end.

Elementary and Secondary Schools

We have studied the elementary and secondary schools earlier and discovered an exemplary transfer from a mis-

sion school to an indigenous Christian institution. While under the auspices of the mission, it met a need in the home as well as in the immediate environment, resulting in numerous contacts with people who needed to be reached. Under the auspices of the Association, it continues to be genuinely Christian in its program and operation.

Theological Schools

From the beginning BOMAS had recognized the need for providing Bible training for nationals. This need became more pressing as workers for the emerging national churches were sought. In 1958, BOMAS approved the establishing of such a theological school, to be known as Parana Bible Institute. It was strongly emphasized that this institution should serve the purpose of promoting evangelism and church planting. Developments resulted in the following report to BOMAS:

1960 recorded also the preparation for the Bible school. Two buildings could be erected, and the school was opened in the beginning of 1961 with Brother and Sister John Klassen assuming the major part of the teaching responsibility. A student body of eight has been registered. Some of the other missionaries help along on a part-time basis. Since the school operates this year only with one class—first year students—we do not need to add additional personnel. For Brazilian circumstances the beginning with eight students is definitely encouraging. It must also be noted that some of our young people from our Mennonite Brethren Churches (Boqueirão and Xaxim) are showing an interest in attending this institution in preference to the German Bible school at present developing in Brazil. We trust that a proper solution of coordination will be found. 15

The school, however, called for considerable expense in connection with the erection of new buildings for teacher-ages, classrooms, dormitories, kitchen and dining facilities for an enrollment of seven students, of which only one was a Portuguese and six came from the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren churches. There was some concern that the overwhelming majority of non-national students could

"become an obstacle to the response of national young people." ¹⁶ By 1970, however, there were 20 students enrolled.

The staff has shown concern for definite contributions to the church planting program. In 1960 it was reported that the teachers and students had established two new evangelistic centers in Curitiba. In the document sent to the Board in 1963, they projected the formation of a group of students that would start one new church a year. This should become self-supporting in five years. Two of its three graduates in 1965 were involved in the mission program. The 1966 Field Report indicates that the school graduated eleven students to that date, ten of which entered Christian service. ¹⁷

The school found further expression in the use of Theological Education by Extension, first under the direction of Floyd Born and later Dietrich Reimer of the Convention. But it is still too early to say what impact this will have upon the church planting program. We shall learn more of it when we come to our study of Colombia.

Medical Ministries

Of special local significance is the medical ministry which Mrs. Olga Dueck and others provided in the home for children, particularly during the earlier years of its existence. Worthy of mention also is the involvement of Mennonite Brethren missions in the Evangelical Hospital owned by the *Sociedade Evangelica Beneficente* in Curitiba.

In the early 1960s this hospital appealed to BOMAS to make supervisory nursing staff available in order to strengthen the Christian witness in the institution. But the administration of the hospital vacillated in its policies. When three missionary nurses, Helen Toews, Katharine Wiens, and Edna Thiessen, did enter service there, the opportunities for witnessing were minimal. The nurses felt obligated to work long hours in the understaffed institution. Consequently the mission had to discontinue this medical ministry, withdrawing the nurses for service elsewhere.

Curitiba Center

By 1959 the Board felt that the center of missionary activity needed to be detached from the home for children. The church planting program would thus be free from unnecessary institutional involvement. In respect to the nature of a proposed "center" in the city of Curitiba, the Board registered its "concern that it not be channeled into the pattern of a mission compound, but that it would provide only facilities for administration and living quarters for a family, that the spiritual ministry, however, be carried out strictly on an indigenous basis, separate from institutional patterns."¹⁸ It could also serve as a center from which larger evangelistic efforts be sponsored. Finally, it provided an opportunity to contact many university students.

Yet even after the completion of the building these possibilities remained dormant for lack of suitable workers. Not until 1967 did the Missionary Administration Committee take a new look at this potential. It passed a resolution that the "center" be developed as: (a) the quarters for starting a congregation; (b) the center of outreach to students and professional people; (c) the central office for filing all official and important documents and papers of the mission; (d) a bookstore, reading room, and library; (e) location for the teaching of evening Bible classes.

By this time the Floyd Borns had already moved into the center. Within a short time the attendance at public meetings totaled more than 30. In time the William Wagners assumed the outreach to university students, while Miss Edna Thiessen began contacting nurses and other professional women. This resulted in the growth of a local congregation, which later secured a national pastor. Despite these activities, the large building erected for the center's activities remained largely unused.

Technically speaking, the center's activities were designed to be an indirect approach to church planting. Attainment of this objective required substantial investments in finance and missionary energy. Yet not until MAC policy changed so that the center became part of a direct approach to the overall missionary goal was its goal partially achieved.

INTEGRATION OF MISSION OUTREACH

The historical overview thus far has shown that there are actually three independent Mennonite Brethren missionary agencies in Brazil.

In the first place, the German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Association served people of German background in Santa Catarina in addition to establishing churches with converts from Portuguese-speaking people, primarily in and around Curitiba.

Secondly, the Missionary Fellowship representing more specifically the Board of Missions and Services of North America became directly involved with funds and personnel.

Thirdly, the Mennonite Brethren Convention, established largely through the efforts of the first two, became a vigorous indigenous force. Though it had limited resources, it set out to multiply churches.

It is obvious that none of the above can be isolated from the others, even if each wants to retain some of its own identity. The resultant overlapping of efforts can easily result in misunderstanding, friction, and some degree of alienation. It is thus important that we understand what led to the present interrelationships, and how these can be regulated for the benefit of all and the best promotion of the cause of missions.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MENNONITE BRETHERN
ASSOCIATION OF BRAZIL TO THE NORTH AMERICAN
MENNONITE BRETHERN MISSIONS

A. E. Janzen writes: "From the outset it was believed and hoped that missions projects in Brazil would become a joint effort of the Conference in North America and the Mennonite Brethren churches in Brazil."¹⁹

As early as July, 1947, the Board of Missions and Services was pleased to note that several from the Mennonite Brethren community in Brazil were assisting the Unruhs. When the Unruhs had to leave, the brethren of the local Mennonite Brethren churches planned for the continuance of the institution. The Rev. Henry Friesen, who had dis-

tinguished himself as a spiritual father, as well as others in the Association, assisted Miss Banman until the Thiesens came. Upon his arrival, Thiesen expressed appreciation for the good fellowship he had experienced at the first meeting with the leading men of the Mennonite Brethren churches. Janzen wrote to Thiesen, "I am glad to hear that the churches over there are accepting you into their hearts and fellowship."²⁰ Sunday mornings, Thiesen would take 20-25 children to the Mennonite Brethren Church in Boqueirão, even though they could not understand the language. On occasion the church also asked the children to present special selections in music. But when Thiesen asked for a Sunday school class for the Portuguese-speaking children, the response made this only a distant reality.

When some of the children desired baptism, a meeting was held with the leading brethren of the Association and the staff of the home to consider the matter. Once it was determined that the children really understood the step of baptism, it was agreed that they should not be denied baptism. Yet it was also agreed that the baptized children should not become members of the local Mennonite Brethren Church, but of a "house church" with mother and father as "houseparents."²¹ This attitude by the church led to a more independent course of action by the home for children, in the process becoming the beginning of two missionary outreaches in behalf of Portuguese neighbors. Despite this the relationship between workers at the home and the church remained cordial. In October, 1952, the Board was told that "the interest and participation on the part of our Mennonite Brethren churches in Brazil is good, and a fine staff is laboring on the station in Curitiba."²²

This cordial relationship continued until the early 1960s, though there was less and less contact between the two Portuguese-speaking and German-speaking churches. The Mennonite Brethren Church at Boqueirão, however, continued to support the Portuguese-speaking Uberaba Church at the home in its program.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a new group of missionaries came to Brazil. They knew little of former ties and working relationships. Furthermore, these mission-

aries had just learned to speak Portuguese and were not able to speak German or the Mennonite Low German. These missionaries communicated among themselves in English, while the German, where it was known, was used less. Communication between the missionaries and the Association declined and the possibility of misunderstanding, lack of confidence, and impatience, increased. By 1969 some of these new missionaries recognized the problem and became vitally concerned in restoring mutual understanding and support.

Meanwhile, each group had developed its own program, started new churches, and even built its own Bible institutes. As the work grew, however, many realized that two Mennonite Brethren Bible institutes, each with a relatively small student body, were not justified. Renewed interest in each other's work developed. The groups explored possibilities for joint efforts, particularly in biblical training. By 1972, the schools had been merged.

While the gap between the activities of the Mission and the Association seemed to increase for a time, there seems to have been no such gap between the Board and the Association. BOMAS continued to support both Bible schools, even turning over the property of elementary and secondary schools to the Association without hesitation.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSOCIATION AND CONVENTION

Sources of information for a discussion of this issue are more limited, but certain factors are quite obvious. Strong relationships largely depend on frequency and nature of interaction. Yet the Association and the Convention each had their separate and full programs. However, as we noted earlier, all of the Portuguese-speaking churches, whether started or sponsored by the Association or mission, united for a common task at the founding of the Convention in January, 1966.

During conversations with members of both the German and the Portuguese churches, it became clear that they would speak of their own group as "we" and "our" and of the

other as "they" or "their." Obvious ingroup and outgroup feelings persisted. Although there was some ethnic overlapping, ethno-centrism was also evident. But it appeared that the distance which existed between the two groups was largely involuntary. When in 1966 the Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations merged, the workers sent out by the two Boards also united their efforts. Those sent out by the latter Board became members of the Missionary Fellowship. This new relationship strengthened everyone's desire to work together.

RELATIONSHIP OF CONVENTION TO MISSIONARIES

There are at least two factors that promote understanding and fellowship between the Convention and missionaries. All understand the same language and all are involved in the same program. In fact, in terms of organization, they belong to one unit. Mission policy does not permit missionaries to be in the majority in any one committee, nor is the missionary to be a pastor of an established church.* Yet missionary John J. Klassen was the secretary of the Convention in 1968, and all the missionaries attended the public meetings of the Convention in 1969. They seemed to be one in program as well as spirit.

Contact with leaders of the Convention showed a two-fold concern: first, they were concerned about lines of communication with BOMAS in North America, preferring that all negotiations regarding missionary work in Brazil be directed to the Convention rather than to missionaries; secondly, leaders asked that missionaries not plan any expansion of missionary activities apart from the Convention. Both of these concerns are more functional than personal.

PROCESS OF INTEGRATION

In a 1968 report we read: "In the Brazilian Mennonite Brethren work there are many power structures that have

* Some have and are serving as interim pastors.

not been coordinated sufficiently to set up a unified front.”²³ A report on an official field visit in 1970 reveals that Brazil poses “an administration problem due to the multiple prongs of administrative relationships.”²⁴ Thus the urgent need for coordination became obvious.

Several factors reveal the need for coordination. In the first place, Brazil is a Portuguese-speaking country and all ethnic groups are moving towards the use of this language. The youth in Mennonite circles can often be heard speaking Portuguese. Furthermore, in order to carry the Gospel beyond the limits of one's own ethnic group, you need to be able to speak the language of the country.

Secondly, spiritual relationship bridges many diversities. All the groups mentioned have the same confession of faith, emphasize the same Christian experience, and pulsate with the same zeal for evangelism.

Thirdly, obvious overlapping in the program of evangelism calls for consultations. One questions the wisdom of two mission thrusts, (one from the Convention and the other from the Association) both seeking to bring the same Gospel to the same people in the most effective way. Both the Convention and the Association churches started Portuguese-speaking churches in and around the same city, Curitiba. Two Bible institutes were difficult to justify when they trained young people in the same faith for the same task.

Fourthly, all agencies relate to the same Board for necessary assistance. Although such a Board may not want to force the issue for practical reasons, it prefers to relate to one agency for all of the needs in Brazil.

Eventually, steps were taken to coordinate efforts. The two Boards in North America, Board of Missions and Board of General Welfare and Public Relations, merged so that all missionary agencies in Brazil negotiate with the same Board. In addition, the missionaries that work with the Convention and those working with the Association have been united into one Missionary Fellowship.

The establishment of the Mennonite Brethren Convention of Brazil in 1966 also brought together churches. Some of these had been sponsored by the Association, while others were sponsored by missions. In the convention all share a

common object of interest, prayer, and labor. At the founding of the Convention "at least four national congregations that were founded by local German-speaking churches joined the Brazilian Convention. Furthermore, of the eighteen salaried pastors serving in the Convention at the end of 1970, ten originally came from the Association."²⁵

Furthermore, the two Bible Institutes, Parana Bible Institute and the former South American Bible Institute, now the Mennonite Brethren Theological Institute of Brazil, negotiated a merger with the beginning of the 1972 school year. This school is now known as Instituto Seminario Biblico Irmaos Menonitas.

Finally, the desire of the Board of Missions and Services is that "we, together with representatives from the two Mennonite Brethren Conferences, should form a mission committee and then, together with these brethren, accept the challenge of Thrust Evangelism, a new approach to church expansion which the Board hopes to implement in a number of fields." Brazil was chosen as the first field because there was every indication that the field of Brazil was a "high potential area."²⁶

SUMMARY

We have endeavored to trace in brief the history of Mennonite Brethren Missions in Brazil from its beginning in a small institution struggling for survival, spiritually and materially, and from one missionary couple that had to return after a two-year term because of illness. The only replacement for the administrator of the missionary home for children was a young lady from North America who had come to Brazil only a week earlier. She had no knowledge of the language or culture of the country. As time went on a multiple-pronged thrust developed. Eventually these several missionary agencies became one united force to win these people of Brazil for God, despite the various ethnic backgrounds. Christ is indeed at work in Brazil.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 2

BRAZIL

1. In Brazil BOMAS is working in two ethnic communities, the Portuguese and the German-speaking Brazilians. From the standpoint of church growth, is it best in such situations to try to force converts into a single church and conference despite their cultural differences? Or should each ethnic group be encouraged to develop its own group of churches fitting its cultural patterns? What are the theological issues involved in each of these approaches? Can we formulate any general principles regarding mission outreach in multi-ethnic societies? What examples do we have from the book of Acts that might give us some guidance?
2. In the past few years BOMAS has had the resources to expand its work. How best can these available resources be used in countries like Brazil, where a national Mennonite Brethren Church exists? Should the missionary forces be expended despite the danger of overshadowing and stifling the national leadership? Should money be given directly to the church for funding its outreach, thereby creating a dependency on external funds, and making the mission board primarily a money granting agency? Suggest some guidelines for relationships between a mission board and a young national church so that the growth and autonomy of the church may be preserved while the board pursues its vision of evangelism and church planting. Should missionaries become members of their adopted church, come under its direction, and live on the level of the people, or should they remain outside of the church as representatives of the mission? Discuss some of the problems that face each of these approaches to mission-church relationships.
3. In Thrust Evangelism, BOMAS initiated a program of saturation evangelism patterned in some ways after an earlier program, Evangelism-in-Depth, which has been

in operation in South America for two decades. Discuss the assumptions behind both of these approaches and try to predict what effect they have on a) the evangelization of an area, b) the building of stable, growing churches, c) the development of national leaders, d) the dependency of national churches on foreign initiatives and finances, and e) the long range prospect for growth as against the more traditional methods, or those used in Colombia, where the work was concentrated in a single place until several churches were established.

MENNONITE BRETHERN MISSIONS IN COLOMBIA



3

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS IN COLOMBIA

THE SETTING

Ever since the Spanish conquerors came to Colombia in the sixteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church has dominated the religious scene. The Vatican made a series of Concordats with the Colombian government beginning in 1887 that designated two-thirds of Colombia as "mission territory." The Roman Catholic Church had complete control of education and spiritual indoctrination in this territory.

For some time two political parties have been in power alternatively: the Conservatives, under Catholic Church domination, and the Liberals, who favored separation of church and state. The opportunities for missions were always greater when the latter was in office. But when the Conservatives took over, missions endured greater hardships.

Between 1948 and 1956 conservative Roman Catholic leaders stimulated direct assaults on Protestants. Forty-seven churches and chapels were completely destroyed by fire and dynamite, while scores of others were closed. Over 200 primary schools were closed, most of them by government order, the remainder by violence. Altogether 78 Colombian Protestants, men, women and children were killed for their faith.¹ After the downfall of dictator Pinilla in May, 1957, this opposition to Protestantism eased. Statistics from 1968 indicate that there were 111,000 Protestants in the country.² At the present, there is freedom for the evangelical cause in Colombia, a land of 20 million.

EARLY MENNONITE BRETHERN OUTREACH

THE INITIAL STIMULUS

The initial stimulus for Mennonite Brethren missions came from a group of students of Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, Canada. Many of them had become involved in the work of Western Children's Mission, bringing the Gospel to neglected areas in the province. In missions courses they learned of needy fields abroad. One of the fields to which several students felt drawn was Colombia. They were particularly interested in the Indians and the Chocoanas, descendants of Negro slaves imported by the Spanish to work in the gold mines in the Choco area.

The president of Bethany, G.W. Peters, communicated this burden of the students in a letter to the Board of Missions, indicating that the students were considering several ways of getting the work started.

- (1) To start and build up an independent work as a foreign mission.
- (2) To become an associate mission of an already existing mission, such as Evangelical Union of South America, Unevangelized Fields Mission, Colombia Evangelical Mission, or others, with our own field, our own administration, our own workers, and our own responsibilities.
- (3) To send our brothers and sisters only to non-Mennonite societies after they have become members of our churches, have been educated and trained in our schools and be further supported by our church members.

These three possibilities present themselves, as I see it, unless our Conference would want to begin a new work in South America. 3

It was this growing missionary spirit in Bethany Bible Institute, Western Children's Mission, and in the hearts of dedicated young people that provided the initial stimulus to the Board to consider the expansion of missions into Colombia.

Further negotiations between the Board and Western Children's Mission resulted in the Board's recommendation to the General Conference in May of 1943: "That we express our interest in mission work in South America and we recommend that the Conference enter upon such work if the Lord opens the way."⁴ This recommendation was accepted.

Mr. and Mrs. G.W. Peters were sent to Colombia to investigate the field. They returned with the strong recommendation that Istmina in the Choco be chosen as a site for mission work. The second recommendation was that Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Wirsche, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Dyck, and Miss Mary Schroeder, all students in Bethany, be sent as pioneer missionaries to the area. BOMAS accepted these recommendations and prepared to implement them.

INITIAL MISSION SITES

The Daniel Wirsches and David Wirsche arrived in Colombia in 1945. John and Mary Dyck, Annie Dyck, Lillian Schaefer, Mary Schroeder, and Kathryn Lentzner came in 1946. Others followed.

Both of the Wirsche families spent their first month in Palmira, Colombia, working with the Gospel Missionary Union. Here they studied the language and looked for a suitable site for a mission station. The Gospel Missionary Union informed the Wirsches of a mission station at La Cumbre, initially started by Miss Anna Woof, missionary of the Plymouth Brethren, in 1929. She had been forced to leave when illness made her return to New York necessary. Miss Woof had left the station in the custody of the Gospel Missionary Union, to be sold, if possible, to a mission.

The Wirsches first visited this station in January, 1946. The site appealed to them for several reasons. La Cumbre, a small city of 3,000, was surrounded by other villages and could serve as a good teaching and preaching center. The altitude of 5,000 feet and the climate were also agreeable compared to the warm Choco. Thus the station could serve as a clearing house for workers.

Upon the recommendation of the missionaries, the Board

purchased the station for \$3,000. The workers took possession of it in July, 1946.

In the meantime, the Wirsche brothers made a 22-day trip to the Choco to ascertain how best to start the work. They discovered that Istmina was the administrative center of the lower Choco and Noanama was somewhat central to several Indian areas.

After an extensive survey of the Choco Department (State), an area of 50 by 250 miles along the Pacific coast, they came to the conclusion that the San Juan district, "giving access to a wide area of the Pacific lowlands and reaching the mouth of the San Juan River, should be a suitable field in which to begin their labors."⁵

THE WITNESS ESTABLISHED

La Cumbre: Although the missionaries remembered that their main responsibility was to be in the Choco, they also recognized divine providence in the opportunities given them in La Cumbre. Here they built on Miss Woolf's foundation. During 15 years of witnessing she had seen numerous people come to Christ. An evangelical church had been organized in January, 1931. This church had 55 members when she left. After her departure, however, the work had declined so much that when the Mennonite Brethren began, there were only a few members left.

When the new missionaries conducted the first evangelical campaign in January, 1947, 12 people responded to the invitation. Some of those believers who had become indifferent were revived and became active witnesses. In July, 1949, 11 people were baptized and the attendance rose to 60.

From this church, the Gospel was carried into the surrounding communities, including Pavas, Pavitas, Belen, San José, Cisneros, and Jiguales. In the last three centers, regular churches were organized, served by national pastors. Later a church in Dagua started by the Gospel Missionary Union also asked to become a Mennonite Brethren Church. Though not all of these churches continued to prosper, the church at La Cumbre saw a record attendance of 160 in 1957. Only when the day school was transferred

to the city of Cali did attendance decline. In 1966, the La Cumbre Church still had 35 members, while its student pastor carried out a visitation ministry in the community.

At the request of parents the Christian day school started by Miss Woof was reopened by Mennonite Brethren workers in October, 1947. But after four days it was ordered closed by local school inspectors. Negotiations with federal officials in Bogotá resulted in the reopening of the school, but there was a constant struggle with local officials until 1952. That year John Dyck returned from Bogotá with a permit from the Minister of Education to operate the institution. With this new liberty and its positive reputation, the school received the official name *Colegio Los Andes*. Children came from surrounding communities, with as many as 30 in one year from the Choco. After 1956, daily chapels were introduced and religious subjects taught. With a growing demand for a Christian high school, a change was effected in 1964. The local churches were asked to assume responsibility for the lower grades, while the upper grades in elementary school, and two years of high school, be taught at *Colegio Los Andes*.

A dispensary was also opened in La Cumbre in 1947. This medical ministry made the people more open to the Gospel. Local health officials, however, soon ordered the dispensary closed.

Istmina was then a jungle town with a Chocoanos population of 3,000. It lies only 212 feet above sea level at the confluence of the San Pablo and San Juan rivers. Here the John Dycks rented a house from the Choco Pacifico Mining Company. Later bought by the mission, the property was large enough to accommodate the church and dispensary, as well as two apartments for missionaries. Two months later, the Misses Mary Schroeder, Kathryn Lentzner, and Annie Dyck joined the John Dyck family to help through a medical ministry. The gospel ministry here was even more closely related to medical aid than elsewhere in Colombia.

The first believers in this area came to trust Christ through a gospel tract left in Condoto by the Wirsche brothers during their exploratory trip in 1946. When the Dycks arrived, many people showed great interest in the newcomers.

"Many came out to listen to the Word of God. Special evangelistic campaigns were held and people were saved in these, as well as in the weekly meetings," the missionaries reported.⁶

Particularly popular was the Sunday school in the chapel, often filled with 100 students. Yet students from the town's trade school and grade schools were forbidden by local government officials to come. Thus attendance fluctuated considerably. The crowd could be completely different from Sunday to Sunday. When the chapel closed for remodeling, the meetings were transferred to the house of Miguel Sanchez, where the attendance went up to 175. In January, 1949, the first believer was baptized. Later in the year, 15 more were prepared for baptism. The church was organized in 1949.

The evangelistic fervor could not be contained in one town. John Dyck wrote: "People from far and wide called at the house and gave special invitations to visit their towns."⁷ So he and his associates visited La Isidra, Suruco, Andagoya, Andagoyita, Primavera, Bebedo, Condoto, Las Mojaras, Novita, Tado, and other small communities. The village work was done as much as possible by national workers under the inspiration and guidance of the missionary. Eventually, the missionaries hoped, a special missionary couple could be secured for this extension work. In many of these places, groups of Christians came together, with some organized into churches.

The missionary nurses who followed the Dycks to Istmina 'established a dispensary for the treatment of minor injuries and ailments and for health education,'⁸ This ministry opened many to the Gospel, but local authorities closed down this work despite protests from the public. But by January, 1948, the Mennonite Brethren Mission secured a permit from Bogotá that permitted the dispensary to operate in the Choco.

Protestant children and students were under considerable pressure in the Catholic-dominated schools to return to the Roman Catholic Church. The missionaries also realized that it would be nearly impossible for young people to be loyal to the Gospel if they were in Catholic schools five days

every week. When local officials stubbornly resisted the opening of a Protestant school, John Dyck went directly to Bogotá to get a permit from federal government officials. He opened the school in May, 1951. As a precautionary measure only boys were admitted so as not to violate Colombian laws prohibiting co-educational instruction. Furthermore, they only accepted children that did not attend other schools. They also discouraged all those who wanted to leave government schools for the Mennonite Brethren school. Yet in spite of such efforts, Colombian officials ordered the school closed on August 14, 1951.

Noanama: The Board learned that David Wirsche had a special burden for the missionary opportunities among the Indian population in Noanama and the Chocoan s majority. Population in the towns were mainly Chocoan s, while the Indians dwelt primarily in the surrounding jungle areas. In January, 1948, the Jacob A. Loewens came to Colombia, intending to go to Noanama. A preliminary visit to the area was made by the Loewens, David Wirsche, and John Dyck in April, 1948, to plan the approach. A site on the north side of the village was selected. Loewen began the long and laborious task of securing the necessary building material and erecting a new residence. In May, 1950, after living in rather uncomfortable rented accommodations for several months, the Loewens moved into the completed residence.

The beginning of the work here was made more difficult because over 90 percent of the people were illiterate. Furthermore, the Noanama Indian dialect had not been put into writing. Jacob Loewen and David Wirsche used their linguistic ability to reduce the language to writing in order to make the Gospel available to some 2,000 Noanama Indians.

The Word was proclaimed with as many visual aids as possible to clarify the concepts to the people. Although they had all been "catholicized" at one time, the Church had not paid any attention to them for years. Thus there was an encouraging response to the Gospel at the weekly services, with attendance reaching a high of 75. In January, 1953, two Colombian brethren ministered in an evangelistic campaign and several nationals came to Christ. Accompanied

by the missionary, some of these nationals traveled through the jungles to other communities, visited individual homes, villages and towns, including those of Doido, Murillo, Negria, Mattrey, and Fujiado.

The operation of a regular school was difficult because of the vigorous opposition of the priest. He persuaded the local mayor and the school inspector to terminate the effort. Nevertheless, because of the great need, a day school was opened in April, 1951, with the assistance of a permit from Bogotá.⁹ Although 21 students enrolled, officials again closed the school because the Choco, including Noanama, was considered Catholic mission territory.

Initially, the Loewens attempted to meet the need for medical help. In 1950 Mary Schroeder arrived to devote herself to this task. Up to 50 people a day came, some traveling several days to reach the missionary nurse, for there was no other medical aid available within several days' walk.

During this period opposition by local authorities increased. Thus the conviction grew that the greatest service could be rendered in linguistics. In December, 1951, the Loewens were released from other duties to concentrate on this.

THE IMPACT OF OPPOSITION

Some of the effects of the outright persecution of all Protestants instigated by the Roman Catholic Church have been cited earlier. The Evangelical Confederation of Colombia adds further details:

The loss of U.S. money in church and mission property came to about \$150,000. The loss sustained by nationals, who had their homes sacked and looted, their crops burnt, was simply incalculable.¹⁰

In response, evangelicals banded together and requested that the terms of the Treaty on Missions of January, 1953, be submitted to Congress for its consideration, as paragraph 4 of Article 53 of the National Constitution required.¹¹ The extremes to which the Roman Catholic Church had gone in its active opposition to Protestant work also created a

sympathetic attitude towards the Protestants among the general population, as well as among many government officials. The testimony of evangelical Christians, though few in number, had had a convincing impact upon the non-evangelical community. The result was greater freedom for the Protestant cause, especially after 1957.

Although evangelical Protestantism continued to grow even during the persecution (1948-1957), it grew much more rapidly once the resistance of government officials relaxed. Today Colombia's Protestants have so much freedom that the Latin American Mission could, in preparation for a country-wide Evangelism-in-Depth program in 1968, publish a leaflet with the bold title *Colombia is Open*. In it they wrote:

Scarcely a decade ago, Christians were being martyred in Colombia for their faith in Jesus Christ. But what a contrast today: Now there is a new openness, persecution seems to be a thing of the past.¹²

Although the figures we have do not include all Protestants in Colombia, they tell us how the members of the Evangelical Confederation fared. This grew from 7,908 members in 1946 to 63,810 in 1966.

The Mennonite Brethren work in particular had been attacked by public officials almost at will. They closed schools and dispensaries nearly everywhere. Public animosity against churches and chapels was general. In Istmina, priests ordered the mission chapel to be closed in December, 1947, and the police complied with their demand. It was reopened only after expensive and time-consuming negotiations in Bogotá. Yet by 1956 the mission chapel was closed again.

In Noanama "on occasion all church activities were suspended by the authorities and in April, 1956, all religious meetings for the nationals were prohibited."¹³

In Andagoyita, the chapel would have been completed "had it not been for many hindrances of the priest and the officials of the local government."¹⁴

In La Cumbre, the church felt led to stop its work in rural areas because of political opposition. In 1956 the activity at Noanama was curtailed completely. Except for

the missionary residences, doors were shut.

Two attempts were made on the life of John Dyck, once "in the office of a lawyer, when a bullet passed between them, narrowly missed both and was embedded in the wall."¹⁵ At another time John was imprisoned.

The Ernest Friesens were informed in advance of a priest's plot against them one day in 1956. They asked for police protection that evening. The police came, staying until 1:30 the next morning. They then left, assuring them that nothing would happen. Yet a few minutes after the police left, the mob arrived and attempted to set their house on fire. The Friesens narrowly escaped through a back door, jumped down a steep decline and disappeared among the trees.¹⁶

Other missionaries were also constantly in danger and "ran the gauntlet of open ridicule each time they went to a meeting."¹⁷ New missionaries had extreme difficulty getting visas to enter the country.

But national Christians suffered even more than the missionaries. Priests and police would come and search the houses of Mennonite Brethren members and take Bibles and all evangelical papers with them. In Istmina, the priest first threatened a woman with hell fire. When that did not have the desired effect, he threatened her husband with excommunication. The missionaries were mobile and could leave, but the nationals "had to stay to face the full fury of the mob."¹⁸

For some Christians the persecution proved a deterrent. One woman expressed what others thought and did. She said, "if it costs that much suffering and tribulation, it does not pay to follow Christ."¹⁹ Yet much of the open opposition proved to be advertising in reverse.

In many places Christians met in homes, conducting private Bible study and services. In 1955, Mrs. John A. Dyck reported attendance at such private services in Istmina had reached 101, double that of the previous year. During this time Daniel A. Wirsche, chairman of the missionary council, wrote to J.A. Loewen, then on furlough:

The possibilities . . . are great, in spite of the persecution and the limitations that are put upon us. These

people here in the Choco are fed up...and have signed several petitions to get (the new priest) out. Our meetings are better attended now in Istmina than ever before, Condoto is just begging for services. We are planning to rent a house there...I wish I could describe to you our visit to Condoto several weeks ago...the whole town was out in the street and the priest yelling and shouting at the top of his loudspeaking outfit: "Get these --- Protestants out of town." He called upon civil authorities...to lay hold on us. Finally one of the businessmen in town came to us and said: "Now you men don't listen to what the priest is saying. By far the majority of the people want you here and when you are ready to leave, my car is at your disposal." So he pulled out his new Pontiac deluxe station wagon and took us free of charge to Andagoya...I never had a year so rich in experience as this past one.²⁰

Yet the work among the Indians in the Noanama area was probably most affected by persistent opposition from local officials. The Jake Loewens transferred their linguistic work to Cali, later continuing the efforts by periodic contacts with people of the same tribe in Panama. When they returned to the United States in 1957, the David Wirsches said: "Since the doors to the Indian work in Colombia are closed, we are not thinking of going back there."²¹ Later, the Wirsches joined Jake Loewen in the linguistic work with the same people in Panama. What effects this had upon the Indians in the Choco we shall indicate in our study of Mennonite Brethren missions in Panama.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

During the first 11 years the main thrust of Mennonite Brethren missions had been in the Choco and at La Cumbre. In methodology, it was essentially mission-centered, with converts coming singly from their social structure.

All involved were, however, concerned that a greater emphasis be placed on building strong indigenous churches. One method proposed involved setting up Bible study and fellowship groups as soon as there were more than one or two believers. Believers would be baptized as soon as they were considered ready. Twelve or more could form an

independent church, which would have its own meeting place, be regularly visited by missionaries for instruction, and send a delegate to the national convention.²²

This approach called for a Bible school in which national leaders could be trained. BOMAS, together with the missionaries, sought to provide such a school as early as 1948. Yet because of the shortage of personnel, legal restrictions and opposition, it was not organized until 1960 under the leadership of missionaries Ernest Friesen and Wilmer Quiring: In 1957 a "New Colombia Plan of Work" was set forth. Priorities were:

(1) Training of nationals as a prerequisite to the indigenization of the work and leading to the evangelization of Colombians by Colombians.

(2) A mission center at Cali, which would remove missionaries from mission stations and call for periodic visits of the missionary to stations or churches as a servant rather than as an administrator.

(3) A greater outreach was to be concentrated in Cali, a city of half a million inhabitants, with only 7,000 of these belonging to an evangelical church.²³

This clearly shifted the emphasis from rural areas to an urban setting.

CHURCH PLANTING AT CALI

Space will permit a fuller treatment of only three churches in the Cali area; the rest will simply be mentioned.

San Fernando Mennonite Brethren Church: A group of Christians, which later became the nucleus of the new church, met here on December 31, 1957. Among the charter members were some who had moved into the city from the rural area around La Cumbre. In the summer of 1959, the church had its first baptism service in Cali, with three witnessing to their new-found faith. In about a year, this new church reported an average Sunday school attendance of around 80, while about 100 attended the morning service. The evening service was similarly well attended.

In 1959, an evangelist, Regina Loyola, came from HCJB, Quito, Ecuador, to conduct an evangelistic campaign. The

church received new inspiration as 70 made a commitment to Christ.

The church prospered under the ministry of Daniel Duque, a national pastor. In one year the membership rose from 20 to 52 members. By 1962 the membership had reached 79. Three new congregations in the suburbs of Cali were started by this church. But this mother church still had 100 members by the end of 1964, 25 new Christians joining after baptism. Missionary Ernest Friesen and others helped to nurture the group, but the pastorate has consistently been filled by Colombians.

Yumbo Mennonite Brethren Church: In 1962, the Bible institute started in Cali in cooperation with the Valle Regional Mennonite Brethren Committee assigned one of its students, Heriberto Lasso, to start a work in Yumbo. A group started to meet in a private home for weekly Bible study and Sunday school. When missionary John Savoias later arrived to provide support, the group moved into a rented building and added Sunday evening services.

In May a number of young people came to Yumbo to visit homes and witness to people. Four made decisions for Christ. To intensify the evangelistic thrust, a vacation Bible school was held, with 60 students. Late in the summer of 1962, Carlos Osorio was invited to become the first pastor. The attendance in the Sunday services soon rose to 50, and by the end of 1963 it had risen to an average of 65.

Villa Colombia Mennonite Brethren Church: Early in 1963 the Ebner Friesens returned to Colombia after furlough. Their assignment was to go into a new section of Cali, Villa Colombia, to open a church there. After a few meetings with some of the Mennonite Brethren members living in the area, they rented a hall and dedicated it on May 26, 1963.* The hall had previously been used by a Unitarian group, so that it had adequate facilities for an auditorium, Sunday school, primary school and residence for a national pastor.

**Colombian Missionary Council Minutes, January 6-8, 1964, January 7-8, 1965, and January 4-6, 1966, serve as source of information for the beginning of these churches.*

With the help of the few Mennonite Brethren members residing in the area, a group was soon established.

Special meetings and film showings were used to attract the people. Homes were also visited. By the end of 1963, Sunday school attendance reached 31. A first baptism of four people was held in March, 1964.

Early in 1964 negotiations began to purchase the rented building with financial help from BOMAS. An evangelistic campaign with Santiago Garabaya in March, 1966, proved particularly fruitful. Over 100 decisions were recorded.

In 1962, both the Alfonso Lopez and Popular Mennonite Brethren churches were started in Cali. The Union de Vivienda Mennonite Brethren Church began in 1965, the Siloe Mennonite Brethren Church in 1966, and Maracaibo Mennonite Brethren in 1967.

The new approach was obviously resulting in an upswing in church growth. Thus we want to examine this new approach more in succeeding pages.

THEOLOGICAL TRAINING BY EXTENSION BEGINS

The Bible school begun in 1960 held classes until 1967. It started with 11 students and reached an all-time high enrollment of 17 in 1967. It graduated five students in 1963 from the three-year course, and another five from the five-year course in 1967. Of the 52 students who attended the school during these years, 12 became full-time workers or pastors, or pastors' wives, while another 27 became active in churches as laymen.

The limitations of such a residential Bible institute became quite evident. Missionary Herman Buller enumerates some of them as:

(1) Immature and poorly motivated students would still be recommended by the churches because of a shortage of workers.

(2) Psychological expectations of students for a salaried position upon graduation made it difficult to fit them into a rural environment.

(3) Because students could not work while studying, financial problems developed. The number of students was

thus far below that needed to meet the demands of a growing church planting program.²⁴

At this point the director of the Cali Institute, Vernon Reimer, learned that the Presbyterian Seminary in Guatemala had changed from a residential to an extension program of theological education. Reimer, together with some of the other missionaries, recommended this extension program to BOMAS in view of several advantages: (1) It would include all students eager to discover and use the gift of the Spirit given to them; (2) It would provide for both the spiritual and intellectual development of students; (3) It would be church-centered and aim at church growth; (4) It would bring teacher to student at regular intervals, enabling the latter to earn while studying. He would also apply what he had learned.²⁵

BOMAS agreed to the new approach. The Colombian staff opened five centers in the Mennonite Brethren constituency: Cali, Cisneros, La Cumbre, Andagoya, and Condoto. In 1968, when the total Mennonite Brethren membership reached 500, fifteen students were enrolled, and in 1970, when the total membership had climbed to 910, the enrollment reached a high of 47. Among the students there were 23 full-time pastors.

Clearly, this new approach was more suited to the missionary objective of reaching as many students as possible. However, theological training by extension faced other problems. For example, it was hard to provide the intensive training that was possible in a residential school. It was, however, a promising start in the attempt to bridge institution and church growth.

AUXILIARY MINISTRIES IN COLOMBIA

Institutions: Institutions for the most part served supporting roles in the task of planting churches rather than being independent ministries in their own right. They were subject, however, to changing political climates as well.

The medical ministry in Noanama, for example, was closed by officials in 1956, while the Istmina dispensary was discontinued in 1964 because of the shortage of work-

ers. In part, better medical services also became available to the larger public from other private and public agencies. Several missionary nurses accepted supervisory positions in the University Hospital in Cali, thus presenting that institution with a gospel witness.

Colegio Los Andes in La Cumbre needed more qualified Christian staff, which reportedly would be more easily available in the city of Cali. Furthermore, the center of the Mennonite Brethren constituency was shifting to Cali and more churches were being established in that city. Such changes resulted in a relocation of the school to Cali, with the name changed to *Colegio Americas Unidas* so as not to confuse it with another institution in Cali by the name *Colegio Los Andes*.

Miss Lillian Schaefer directed the school from 1955-1967. She was followed by Peter Loewen. The school prospered, but there was a growing conviction that it should be turned over to the national church. Thus missionary personnel was withdrawn, with Peter Loewen entering a church planting ministry.

Christian Service * entered Colombia in 1959, providing qualified Christian young people to work in various institutions. In their free time they helped in the missionary effort. By the end of 1969, 38 of these workers, 12 couples and 14 single people, were assigned to English language schools in Colombia. These young people were sponsored by BOMAS, but worked primarily under the administration of schools other than Mennonite Brethren. The role of these services in the overall missionary strategy has not been sufficiently defined and needs further evaluation.

Literature Center: As the Mennonite Brethren churches multiplied in Cali, it became clear that Christian literature center was needed in the heart of the city. It now serves as a Christian bookstore and reading room. In addition, it is a distribution center for the literature needs of the churches and the colporteurs in the churches.

* Short term service by Christian young people, who would receive maintenance and \$10 a week spending money.

A BOMAS report for 1965 reveals the sale of 450 Bibles and New Testaments, distribution of 110,000 tracts, and free distribution of 10,500 periodicals as a witness and also as advertisement to encourage subscription. In 1968 sales totalled \$1,000 U.S.

The Ernest Friesens were responsible for the literature ministry prior to 1971, when the center was turned over to the nationals. When another bookstore opened in Cali, the ministry of the Mennonite Brethren center declined.

Film Library: Gospel films have also been used effectively in the missionary program in Colombia. Films such as "Dust or Destiny" or "Lucia" have been used to bring many to Christ. By 1965, the mission owned five films and arranged for 92 showings. Herman Buller wrote in 1970:

A tremendous ministry is being performed through the use of Christian films. These have served to open entire new sections of the population with a message that is dynamic, relevant, and accepted. The film library consists of some ten excellent films, including productions by Moody Institute of Science and Cathedral Films. There is also a very complete index of a wide variety of filmstrips and other audio-visual material useful in Bible teaching series in the churches.²⁶

The above study of institutionalism in the Colombian setting brings several principles into focus: (1) Institutions were generally viewed as means to an end, not as ends in themselves; (2) Institutional growth was responsive to the changing needs in church planting; (3) Institutions may require heavy financial investment without significant returns. Examples are the new building at Noanama and the building now empty at La Cumbre; (4) While it was hoped that institutions would be operated on the level of the national church rather than by North American standards, this was not always the case.

THE CHURCH TAKES SHAPE

MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH GROWTH

During the first 11 years, from 1945 to 1956, the church grew to 80 members. During the next decade membership

more than quintupled, climbing to 424. By 1969 it was 654. By 1970 believers and friends met in 24 worship centers, 18 of which had their own church buildings. These groups were served by 17 full-time national pastors. Clearly, the Lord was at work in the hearts of many.

Various factors contributed to the accelerated church growth after 1956. Politically, the climate changed. The open hostility of the party dominated by the Catholic Church declined sharply after the fall of General Rojas Pinilla in March, 1957. During the years of opposition, the entire Protestant Church in Colombia "matured," preparing it for advance. When a new "mood" began to characterize Catholicism with the advent of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, the church was ready to capitalize on the greater openness in all of Latin America. New methods without these changes would not necessarily have produced greater church growth.

Another key factor was the move into Cali from the rural areas in the Valle and the Choco, where people continued to live in a set pattern that had almost become traditional. With this move the mission appealed to people who had migrated from stable settings and become detached in the new urban environment. This cultural factor makes people receptive to the Gospel. When this was followed by saturation evangelism, the results were impressive.

The change from a mission-centered approach to a church-centered strategy was also significant. So, too, was the more recent change in theological education from a residential school to an extension seminary. However, too little time has elapsed since the latter was introduced to determine its effect on the growth of the church.

Greater emphasis has been placed on church growth, keeping missionaries, pastors, and churches constantly aware of evangelism and the priority it deserves.

Evangelism-in-Depth does not appear to have significantly contributed to Mennonite Brethren Church growth in Colombia, though Joe Walters was loaned to the Evangelism-in-Depth organization for a year. Herman Buller and Ernest Friesen also represented the Mennonite Brethren Church in Colombia in this movement.

Interestingly, Buller makes no reference to the 1968 Evangelism-in-Depth campaign when in 1971 he writes about church growth in Colombia. In a later evaluation of Evangelism-in-Depth, Buller gives credit to the biblical principles operative in the movement and notes the mobilization of the laity for witnessing, but concludes by saying:

While there have been many conversions for which we praise God, I believe that most of us feel disappointed. We had expected more. We do not notice the growth that we had anticipated at the level of the local churches, where, after all, the fruit of our labors must ever be gathered together.²⁷

INTERRELATIONSHIP OF NATIONAL CHURCHES

The National Convention was born on July 26, 1953, when the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Colombia met at Noanama. The Convention met regularly to discuss relationships and for fellowship. On July 13-17, this Convention adopted the National Church Constitution, which helped to regulate the operations within the local church, the relations of churches to each other, as well as the relations of churches and the Convention to BOMAS.

A National Executive Committee has functioned since 1953, meeting every three months to consider issues coming to the fore during that quarter. This committee also regulates much of the extension work. For example, in 1968, this committee asked missionary Alvin Voth to start a work in Medellín. It also assigned a lay worker to begin mission work in the seaport of Buenaventura.

In a letter missionary Ebner Friesen writes:

Easter Sunday we went to Queremal where Modosto has been doing a good work. Four people were baptized to form the charter members of a new church there. Soon he will have another group ready above Dagua at Pinal who want to be baptized. Friday I am making a ten-day trip back to the Llanos...to train leaders there.²⁸

Buller concludes: "We see that, in spite of a decrease in missionary personnel, the Gospel is spreading outward from the established bases."

Once national churches are born as a result of missionary efforts, and these churches organize a Convention, they become an entity that thinks, plans, proposes, and acts. This calls for careful integration of the interests of the national church and the mission agency. The stated purpose of BOMAS "is to establish a New Testament church. Once a church has been established, the worker should take inventory to see when responsibility can be transferred to the indigenous leaders. Although the indigenous leaders may not seem ready, maturity in the work comes with responsibility."

In Colombia, however, there have been misunderstandings between the church and BOMAS. Repeated meetings between nationals and missionaries became necessary to clarify issues. Periodic visits from representatives of BOMAS also helped to cement better relationships. The goal of BOMAS is to work together with the National Convention as brethren in order to build the church of Christ in Colombia.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 3

COLOMBIA

1. One of the major decisions facing BOMAS and the missionaries in Colombia was whether to evangelize the tribal population or the general peasant-urban society. While both should hear the Gospel, resources and personnel were limited, and therefore priorities had to be determined. In favor of the former was the fact that tribals have generally been more receptive to the Gospel, and have a greater potential for large people movements. In favor of the latter is the fact that most people are found in the villages and cities. Discuss the pros and cons for each of these strategies, and outline some major principles that one might use in determining strategy of church planting.
2. After BOMAS decided to shift its emphasis from tribal to the main Colombian society, it faced further questions:
 - a) Should the work be concentrated in the villages where the majority of the people live, or in the rapidly growing cities which are the centers of communication, influence and change?
 - b) Should missionaries concentrate on the poorer classes that have often been more receptive to the Gospel in the past, or on the new and growing middle class providing a great deal of the leadership in the country?
 - c) Should the missionaries be spread out in a number of cities in order to provide as wide an evangelization of the people as possible, or should they be concentrated in a single city in order to build up a brotherhood of churches that could strengthen and encourage one another?
 - d) What is the place of Christian institutions, such as schools and hospitals, in an urban setting where the government is increasingly providing these services for the people? Are institutions effective in evangelism, in preparing leaders, or in helping the churches to develop? Are limited resources most profitably spent on building institutions that are usually costly, or should they be

channeled only to evangelism and church ministries?

e) Is advanced Bible teaching and the training of ministers best achieved by means of central Bible schools and seminaries, or by in-service training programs such as TAFTEE, in which the school seeks to come to the people in their normal vocations?

Discuss the issues involved in each of these questions and suggest principles that might help us determine mission strategies for the future.

CHACO

BRAZIL

ARGENTINA

PARAGUAY

LEPER COLONY

Asunción

Encarnación

Rivers: Pilcomayo River, Paraguay River, Alto Paraná River

Settlements and Distances:

- KILOMETER (End Station) 165
- Filadelfia 15
- Neu-Halbstadt 25
- Sommerfeld 55 mi.
- Puerto Casado 90 mi.
- Horqueta 22 mi.
- Concepción
- Tiefenbrunn 44 mi.
- Mbopicia
- Rosario
- Caaguazú 62 mi.
- Villarica 27 mi.
- Encarnación

Distances:

- 250 or more miles, two to four day boat trip
- 110 mi.
- 25 mi.
- 25 mi.

Legend:

- Cities
- ⦿ Capital
- ⦶ Railroads
- Mennonite Settlements

Numbers 1-8:

- 1 Neu-Halbstadt
- 2 Filadelfia
- 3 Sommerfeld
- 4 Tiefenbrunn
- 5 Friesland
- 6 Primavera
- 7 Sommerfeld
- 8 Berghal

4

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS IN PARAGUAY

THE SETTING

Paraguay, a land-locked country in the heart of South America about the size of California, has a population of 2,231,000. The Paraguay River divides the country into two parts. Heavier forest growth and more rainfall on the east side makes this the more populous section. On the west side is the Chaco, with considerably less rain and much less population. Climatic conditions, including intense heat, have earned the Chaco the nickname, "the Green Hell."

Paraguay is desperately trying to develop a self-sustaining economy. This has been difficult in a country where 54 percent of its area is covered with forest, 40 percent is pastoral, and 4 percent is agricultural, with only one percent cultivated.

The people of Paraguay are nominally Roman Catholic, but only about 10 percent fulfill even minimum church requirements. Twenty thousand are considered Protestants, with various Indian tribes still clinging to some form of animism.

Wilfred Barbrooke Grubb (1865-1930) was the first white man to make his home among the Lengua Indians, who had long been feared by the Paraguayans.¹ Yet most missions did not come to Paraguay until the first half of the twentieth century.

INITIAL MISSION EFFORTS

One of the first settlers of the Fernheim Colony in 1930, missionary G. B. Giesbrecht, reported:

Already on the second day, when we were waiting at Puerto Casado for our transport to the Chaco, I had a touching experience. With my companion I walked along

the Paraguay River where we met three strangers, a half clothed couple and a naked boy. His answer was "Those are the wild ones." 2

In the light of what later happened this event was indeed prophetic.

The moment these immigrants from Russia arrived in the Chaco, the Lengua Indian was there to meet them. Giesbrecht said in 1950, "The Fernheim Colony has existed for 20 years and for 20 years the Indians have stood at our door." 3

Mennonite attitudes to the Indians varied. Some feared them. Others considered them a labor force that could be exploited, while others felt they should be helped.

Even though the early settlers were more than busy with clearing land, carving out a living, providing schools for their children, and organizing their own church life, they could not dismiss their responsibility to the Indians. The urgency of bringing the Gospel to these primitive people was mentioned several times in sessions of the KfK * which had the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Mennonite settlers. Concerned men from all branches of the Mennonites in Fernheim urged the commission to request official permission from the Paraguayan government for such an undertaking. The KfK sent the Paraguayan government the following document, dated February 1, 1935, and signed by three of its members and the Oberschulze, the highest official of the Colony:

We Mennonites of the Fernheim Colony in the Gran Chaco Paraguay feel it to be our duty to inform our great government, whose gracious protection and good will we have enjoyed for five years, of the following:

Since we have lived among the Lengua Indians from the time we arrived in the Chaco, and they have at various times worked on our land, we have gradually evolved a plan to try to persuade them to reside permanently at the outskirts of the Colony. The purpose of this endeavor is to tie these savages more to the earth in order that eventually they may become citizens of the

* Komitee fuer Kirchliche Angelegenheiten

country of Paraguay. In order to carry out this undertaking in the right manner, we are firmly convinced that these Indians must be given the Gospel of God and Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it would be bad judgment were we to restrict ourselves only to Christian missions. No, we firmly believe that some material aid must be given.⁴

In just over a month, they received a most encouraging reply from the Minister of Lands and Colonies of the Paraguayan government. He wrote that the government greatly appreciated what the Mennonites were planning to do for the Indians. He assured them that the government would give them any assistance needed.⁵

Encouraged, the brethren made preparations for a founding missionary conference in September of the same year. Forty-eight persons from the various Mennonite churches of the Colony attended the conference and adopted a constitution. The clear inference was that the mission to the Indians would not be a project of the Mennonite churches, but rather of a mission society open to all members of any church. They also elected a special committee to initiate the mission outreach in keeping with the decisions of the mission association. By secret ballot the following were elected to the conference committee: N. Wiebe, J. Isaac, G. Giesbrecht, N. Siemens, J. Wall, and G. Schartner. Those present agreed that the committee could divide the work among themselves.

On September 23, 1935, the committee of the newly-formed mission society had its first meeting. It had only \$30, received earlier from MCC, and no workers, but they manifested great faith.

The Lord spoke to Abram Unger about the work among the Lengwas. He left his parental home on September 30, 1935, and put himself at the disposal of the mission society. A little later, Mr. and Mrs. Abram Ratzlaff became willing to move all their belongings and farm equipment to the mission station. Their objective was to motivate the Indians to begin farming and show them how to farm. The Lord spoke to the Rev. and Mrs. G. B. Giesbrecht, a teacher in the Fernheim Colony, about the spiritual ministry to the

Indians. Taking their children with them, they moved to the mission station on August 11, 1937.

The work was difficult. Often the workers cried out, "Lord, carest Thou not that we perish?" But a beginning had been made and the Mennonites of the Chaco, five years after their arrival, had joined hands to bring the Gospel to the Indians.⁶

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The Mennonites experienced many difficulties in this missionary venture. The first site, selected in October, 1935, with the help of the Lengua chief, Anton, proved disappointing. The water was bitter, there were many vermin, and there was little room for expansion. Another site search discovered a large clearing called Yalve Sanga, located about twenty miles south of Filadelfia, and known to many Indians as a sanctuary during the Chaco war. The mission transferred to the new site in the spring of 1936. More and more Indians gravitated to this permanent location, so that a 1943 census showed 625 of them living in the area.

The Mennonite churches in the Chaco developed a zeal for missions, but their resources were very limited. Many of their donations were gifts in kind rather than in money. An open appeal for contributions for this new venture was made in various news releases to Christian and denominational magazines in South as well as North America. These releases included a description of the work and a challenge to respond to "open doors," with directives where to send gifts. In response, mission funds began to come from North America. They showed an intense interest in missions to the Indians on the part of Mennonite Brethren churches in North America. As a result, a growing number of contributions came via the Mennonite Brethren Mission office, where Dr. H. W. Lohrenz served as executive secretary. Still the mission outreach continued to be hampered by a lack of funds, and a solution to this problem had to be found.

A third difficulty arose because differences in culture made it difficult for Mennonites and Indians to understand

each other. The Lengua Indians existed in a nomadic and food-gathering culture. The Mennonites were agriculturists and therefore a settled people. Indian religion was rooted in animism, while the Mennonite faith was based on the Bible. The Mennonite is ambitious and views the Indian as lazy. The Indian tends to be very patient and has a more even "innermost," while the Mennonite is more impatient or has a "wavy innermost." The Indian knows no private ownership of land or products of nature, and therefore his "innermost" compels him to share whatever he has. The only property he knows are the few personal tools, utensils, or articles of clothing that he may have. The Mennonite does not only claim personal effects, but aspires to the ownership of land, crops, and fruit.⁷

Such cultural differences tend to create misunderstanding and make communication difficult. Adjustments must be made by both groups. But as is often the case, so also here the technologically advanced culture tended to dominate the more primitive culture.

Apart from the missionaries, the Mennonites have not put forth special efforts to understand the Indian's way of life. While the Indians can make themselves understood in the Mennonite dialect, practically no one but the missionaries can communicate with the Indian in his own language. The Mennonites have not become nomads, but it is no longer fair to call the Lengua nomads, for they have turned to agriculture. Indeed, one can speak of a cultural breakdown among the Indians largely because they have adopted so much of Mennonite culture. Not only in church life, but also in other areas of life the Indian found functional substitutes for those things in his own culture which he surrendered.

In the world of missions, the messenger must still become "all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22). In this effort the missionary in the Chaco must go against stream. While the trend is from Indian to Mennonite culture, the missionary in his work must move from Mennonite to Indian culture. Thus it is no wonder that eleven years elapsed before the first Indian was converted.

The fourth difficulty in this missionary effort was language. As far as the Mennonites knew, Lengua had never been put into writing, so no vocabulary nor grammar was available. Fortunately, one of the Indians, Sepe Lhama, began communicating with the missionaries, first with sign language and then with either German or Spanish words. He recognized some of the questions asked, and responded as best he could in Lengua.⁸ Thus the missionary gathered a vocabulary and began recognizing verb forms. The real breakthrough came only after a difficult journey of 280 miles by G.B. Giesbrecht and B.P. Epp to an Anglican Mission, where they found an English Lengua grammar. B.P. Epp translated this into German and thus made it accessible to Mennonite missionaries.

MISSION METHODS

Through the years, the Mennonites employed various methods to reach the Indians for Christ. The initial emphasis was on communicating the message of the Gospel in the Indian's language. They could have been content to communicate with the few Indians who could understand German or Low German. But this approach would never have reached the people as a whole, nor would it have touched the Indian at the level of his innermost. At first B. P. Epp gave himself to intense language study, but Dietrich Lepp and Nito Caballero completed the translation of the New Testament into Lengua only recently. During this time Gerhard Hein and Seyinyayeik translated the New Testament into Chulupi.

The infanticide practiced by the Indians filled both Mennonites and missionaries with horror. The Indians believed that the newborn child was not a person until it had been nursed or before it had undergone an earlobe-piercing festival.⁹ Before this had been experienced by the child, killing the child was not considered murder.

Missionaries put forth intense efforts to save these infants. At first a children's home was started. But the institutional approach was not the answer, since the children who had been in the home found it difficult to return to

their own people. Thus it was agreed that such children be placed in the home of Christian families.

Indian youth and adults needed some form of education. Yet the missionaries experienced great difficulty when they attempted an educational program. Missionary Giesbrecht writes:

In no other branch of our work has the unreliability of the Indians and their tendency to arbitrary living shown itself so detrimental as in school life. Again and again we felt as though we should not try it any more. We can confess to you that with all sincere and honest intentions, we have started school with larger, as well as smaller groups. At times it appeared as though the best results were on the horizon—but then—often after eight days or two weeks, those little people just evaporated from under our hands and we stood before empty classes, except for the soiled notebooks. What had happened? The children that we had gathered with so much effort had either taken off on their own or relatives had come to pick them up during recess.... The next day or a little later, we learned that these children had run from mission station to Filadelfia. Many of them we never saw again.¹⁰

But the mission saw no alternative; the missionary had to continue the effort.

The proclamation of the Gospel was certainly of utmost importance in missionary strategy. For this the missionary had to know their language as well as understand the Indian culturally and psychologically. So they began with "friendship evangelism." During the evenings the missionaries would sit on a tree stump in the villages, with 5 to 10 men around them, and teach them the message of love. As these men heard it, they would often repeat what was said after them, word for word. Only gradually could the semblance of a gospel service be introduced. The Indians would sit on the ground, usually out in the open, to hear that God loves them.

The first ten years of missions under the auspices of "Licht den Indianern" constituted a time of plowing, planting, and watering. But the climax of this period was the conversion of the first Indian, Sepe Lhama.¹¹ This was the beginning of a rich harvest.

An Assist for "Licht den Indianern" from North America

INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS FOR FINANCIAL HELP

As the "Licht den Indianern" Mission continued to grow and expand, its financial undergirding became more and more critical. One of the first missionaries, G.B. Giesbrecht, wrote to the executive secretary of the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services:

The financial situation is presently such that it appears as though I will need to return to teaching next year. As the Lord gives grace, I still want to be involved in missions. . . Again and again I think about it, whether the time has not come when we should associate ourselves with a larger mission society. In our settlement, where the question of existence is still a serious one, the support of the mission, i.e. of foreign missions, can become very difficult. But in view of the need among the people (Indians), we cannot turn from them.

Dear Brother, may I confidentially ask whether your mission board would put its arms under our mission work, if our mission society could no longer carry on? Would there even be a possibility that we could associate ourselves with your mission board? Would you be kind enough to write me something about this? 12

When A. E. Janzen visited the Chaco in behalf of MCC in 1943, the Committee of "Licht den Indianern" met with him and conveyed a formal request that the Mennonite Brethren Conference of North America take on this mission to the Indians. Hopefully, this could be arranged in such a way that "Licht den Indianern," as well as the members from the three churches, could continue to participate in the work.

When A. E. Janzen returned to North America he recommended to BOMAS that the request be granted. Dr. Lohrenz wrote "Licht den Indianern" that BOMAS was willing to provide assistance. In the meantime, he proposed terms of transfer in keeping with their request.

The arrangement called for "Licht den Indianern" to

function without any changes in the organizational structure. He suggested that the missionaries on the field and three representatives from their mission society form an advisory council which could meet at least twice a year to prepare a report of the work and make appropriate recommendations. The Board in North America would then consider these and make the necessary decisions.¹³

In North America, the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in 1945 accepted the recommendation of BOMAS to make the Indian mission in Paraguay part of its outreach.¹⁴ The brethren from Paraguay responded positively in a letter from the Rev. J. Isaak, chairman of "Licht den Indianern."

THE MISSION OUTREACH EXPANDS

BOMAS sent two couples to Paraguay in 1946 to work among the Indians. The B. P. Epps returned for their second term, while the Jacob H. Franzes went as first-time workers. Because of ill health the Epps had to return to Canada in 1949, but the Franzes continued to work in Paraguay for 25 years. The Kornelius Isaaks and the Gerhard Heins joined the G. B. Giesbrechts as representatives of the churches in Paraguay.

Sometime before this new influx of workers the Chulupi Indians, who occupied various areas in the Chaco in their search for a livelihood, had made their first effective contact with the Mennonite colonies. While still in the process of deciding where to establish his mission, Franz met a Chulupi Indian who spoke Spanish. This Indian told him that he came from the Pilcomayo River district. He had traveled about a great deal and seen many Indian missions of other denominations including Catholic, but he had not met a single mission working among the Chulupies. All were working with some other tribe. He was distressed that no one cared for the Chulupies. Although Franz had already considered starting a work among Chulupies, this incident helped him to decide "where his field should be. He had the joy of telling the Indian that he had come to bring the Gospel to the Chulupies."¹⁵

The Chulupi tribe, with a membership of close to 14,000,* is quite different from the Lengua tribe. Epp noted that a Chulupi "is much more excitable. He clings more firmly to his nomadic way of life, and to his old customs and traditions than the Lengua."¹⁶ This was demonstrated by their repeated uprisings. In 1950 two chiefs of this tribe fought against each other, resulting in several deaths. Such fighting ceased only when missionary Franz mediated between the two groups. Or again when a rumor among the Chulupies in 1951 indicated that a man had come down in Argentina with money for them, they departed as a group to get it. After three weeks they returned, very disappointed.¹⁷

Not only was the Chulupi a different type of person, he also spoke a different language. It is rich in vocabulary and quite complex in grammar.

In addition to the outreach to the Lengua, a second witness was started by Franz among the Chulupies that had settled near Filadelfia.

When the Neuland Colony was established in 1947, many of the Chulupies moved near Neu Halbstadt (over 30 km. from Filadelfia) to secure work from the newly-arrived Mennonites. The mission outreach called Cayin o Clim was begun here in 1954, with Kornelius Isaak and Walter Rennerts in charge.

On both of these Chulupi stations, missionary residences, assembly halls, schools and a clinic were eventually erected for the expanding ministry.

Other centers of work developed. The Lenguas were being reached at Yalve Sanga, Laguna Pora and Campo Largo, while the Chulupi work centered in Filadelfia, Cayino Clim, Campo Alegre, Yalve Sanga, Pozo Amarillo, Nueva Vida, and La Esperanza.

MISSIONARY METHODS

Some missionary methods, particularly the use of the vernacular and education, have already been discussed.

* These were scattered over a wide geographic area, including the Paraguayan and Argentinian Chaco and areas of Bolivia.

These continued to be emphasized under the new arrangement. But alongside them other methods came to play a significant role.

Medicine: The use of medicine is an important aspect in mission work, for 'sickness, death and medicine men are concepts which Chulupies mention mostly in a whisper.

Every illness is viewed either as a judgment or the result of the negative influence of a medicine man. The soul of man is seen as an entity composed of three parts. Any part can be stolen and held captive by a medicine man. If only one part is stolen, the person is sick. If two parts are taken, the sickness becomes serious. If all three are taken, death is certain. Yet the medicine man also has the ability to find that part of the soul that is missing and restore it, bringing recovery.¹⁹ Thus sickness is closely related to spiritism and religion.

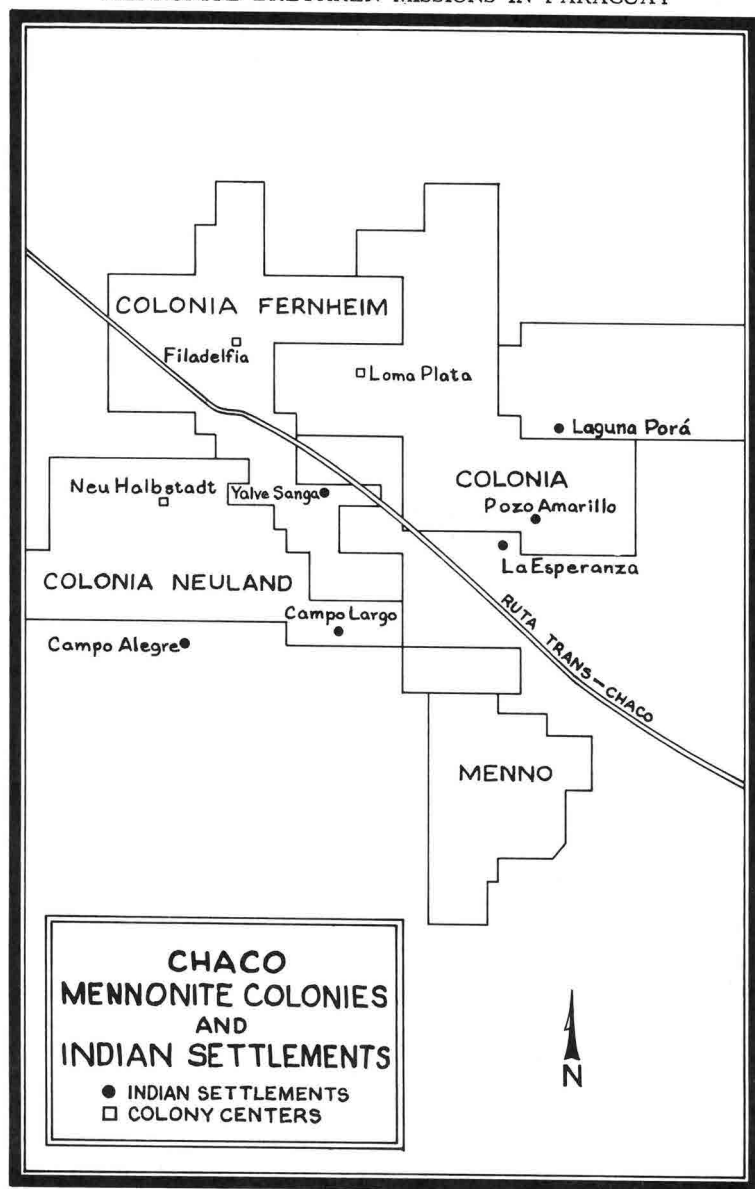
A missionary cannot really minister to such people without being concerned about their health. From the very beginning in 1935 the missionary, aided by a nurse when possible, dispensed medicine and tried to take care of the more common ailments.

With more help from North America, it was possible to build and maintain a clinic at each center. Under the auspices of the Settlement Board this program developed until, in 1970, there were hospitals with a total capacity of 59 patients and a staff consisting of a full-time physician, Dr. H.E. Epp, 11 nurses, and seven nurses' aides.²⁰

Settlement: The missionaries felt that settlements for the Indians were necessary, for it was clearly difficult to build a church among nomadic people. Previous efforts by Protestants as well as Catholics to settle the Indians had not proved successful. But now the need for settling the Indians became even more urgent for reasons other than that of building the church.

Civilization had moved into their hunting territory, built fences and staked out private property. Thus the Indian was robbed of space and game that had been his for centuries. This space problem was compounded by the discontinuation of infanticide, which resulted in a population explosion.

MENNONITE BROTHERS MISSIONS IN PARAGUAY



Additionally, employment opportunities among the Mennonites caused more and more Indians to stay in or near the colonies, inducing an increasing number to settle down.

After the first seven Lengua men had been baptized on the confession of their faith on February 24, 1946, they requested help in settling down in order to detach their families from pagan village life. By now, however, the missionary's numerous disappointing experiences made him apprehensive. He agreed to settle the Indians only on a provisional basis for one year.

Six families were given an opportunity to prove themselves on land received from the Yalve Sanga Station. This experiment was so successful that plans for a more permanent village were made. From there the settlement program grew. By 1970 there were eight permanent Indian settlements containing 927 families and 6,790 persons.²¹

Why did this Mennonite attempt to settle the Indians succeed when previous attempts had failed? Jacob Loewen indicates several factors: (1) never before had the Indians had the benefit of such an object lesson as the Mennonites offered them with their progress in Chaco agriculture; (2) among the Mennonites the Indians received in-service training in agriculture; (3) a period of 16 years or more had elapsed from the time of the first Indian contact with Mennonites. (Fernheim was founded in 1930 and Menno Colony in 1927) and the age group that was now called upon to make the change had been more stationary for some time. They were not totally nomadic any longer.²²

To this we must add the impact of the Gospel, which played an important part in their moving to the settlements. This fact suggests that it is easier to change the life pattern of a people after the people themselves are changed. At least in this instance, mission preceded settlement.²³

Division of Labor: Repeatedly the pressure of institutional responsibility has diverted missions from its primary purpose of evangelism and church planting. From our study, it becomes obvious that this could easily have happened in Mennonite Brethren missions to the Indians. But in the spring of 1960 BOMAS wrestled with the problem of indig-

enizing various aspects of the work so as to concentrate more definitely on its main objective.²⁴

Progress in this direction was slow. Eventually an organizational structure was established in which MCC could help through a Settlement Board on the field. This organization sought to look after the interest of the mission, protect the initiative of the Indians, and focus the help of the Mennonite colonies.²⁵

In this arrangement the mission would concentrate its efforts on evangelism and church planting, while the Settlement Board would assume responsibility for the settlement of the Indians, education and medicine.²⁶ MCC responded favorably, and the Settlement Board came to consist of representatives from the Mennonite Colonies, MCC, Missions, and the two Indian tribes, the Lengua and Chulupi.

This proved to be a strategic arrangement for the future development of the settlement of Indians as well as for BOMAS. The Board had thus freed itself from the burden of excessive institutionalism and could promote the spiritual work connected with church building. The Settlement Board had a clear mandate, could tap more resources, and even appeal to secular foundations for the funding of various projects. As the result of this arrangement, for example, the Government of the Netherlands financed the buildings and necessary furnishings for a number of elementary schools, while the German government started to support hospitals.²⁷

At the same time, the Mennonite Brethren churches in Paraguay requested BOMAS to create a center in Asunción where all the needs and activities of missions and churches would be integrated. These churches also requested that missionary J.H. Franz be appointed as secretary for the center to represent needs and interests from South America to the Board, as well as represent the Board in the work in South America. This clarified administrative lines of authority so that the work could proceed with greater dispatch.

Evangelism and Church Planting: Evangelism and church planting, as we have noted, was the central concern of the missionaries from the very beginning of the mission work. From the beginning, we are told, "the itinerant trips were

made not only for the purpose of occasionally bringing the Gospel to them, but also for the purpose of organizing preaching centers or out-stations, and for the purpose of training Indian workers for Christian service among their own people."²⁸

The first Lengua convert, Sepe Lhama, and six other Lengua men were baptized on February 24, 1946, more than 10 years after the "Licht den Indianern" had been launched. In three succeeding baptismal services 21 more Lenguas (of which 11 were women), were baptized, so that by 1950 the Lengua Church had 28 members. Among the Chulupies almost 12 years passed before the first 22 believers were baptized on March 9, 1958. And by 1954 a second Lengua Mennonite Brethren church was growing on the Laguna Pora station under the direction of Dietrich Lepp. A BOMAS report indicates:

The Lengua Church is growing fast and is a surprise to many, especially also to the people visiting Paraguay. The revival during the Christmas season has brought about a wonderful change at Laguna Ipuna, one of the new centers of our mission enterprise.²⁹

The type of work done on the various stations can best be described by quoting a report G.B. Giesbrecht sent about Yalve Sanga:

The current spiritual program at Yalve Sanga is as follows: (1) On Sunday morning there is a general worship service at which the attendance of Indians is around 250 to 300. The services as a whole are directed by one of the missionaries. The missionary and one or two Indians preach. (2) The Sunday school conducted by two Indian Christians takes place before the general service, with an attendance between 60 to 70 children. (3) On Sunday evenings the services are always under the leadership of the Indian Christians, and missionaries are the visitors. (4) On Tuesday and Thursday evening there is a regular preaching of the Word, and the leadership is always in the hands of the Indians. (5) On Saturday evenings there is a separate prayer meeting in all three Indian villages. (6) During the year shorter and longer evangelization tours have been made by Indian evangelists, and the results

have been a blessing. (7) It has been a joy to the missionaries to witness a number of conversions, for which we are most thankful to the Lord. The Lord willing, there will be a baptismal service in the near future. A special time of blessing was enjoyed during the visit of Brother and Sister H. K. Warkentin. Through their work 14 found peace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (8) For the Christmas program a play portraying the shepherds of Bethlehem was presented by the children. It was well received by the audience. (9) Special hours of rich blessing in the church work are experienced in times of preparation, during the testimony meetings, and during communion services, where we especially sense the Lord's nearness.

The future work of the church at Yalve Sanga, with special reference to the building of churches and evangelization. (1) Attempt a careful yet far-reaching indigenization of the national church; (a) ordain several preachers; (b) elect a church leader who, with the assistance of the missionary, administers the local church; (c) elect a church council whose duty it shall be to share in the consultation and answering and deciding of church questions and matters. Remarks: We have had preachers, church leaders as well as a church council in the past, yet without official church recognition. We deem it advisable in the matter of organization to grow into it gradually. (2) In order to prevent the young churches from becoming confused in their concepts and doctrines, it is highly important that a Bible school with uniform program be initiated, which would also help in the establishment of the churches and in the matter of evangelization.³⁰

By 1970, the missionaries could report that out of the estimated 2,200 persons in the Lengua tribe, 770 believed the Gospel and had become members in one of the three local Lengua churches. From the Chulupi tribe, with about 3,000 persons, 750 believers had joined the three local Chulupi churches.

The need for training Indian believers for a leadership role in their churches resulted in several attempts to open a Bible school for them. Progress was, however, slow, usually because so many potential church workers lacked general education. But it was encouraging to note that an indigenous leadership was emerging.

Outreach to Other Indian Tribes: Although Mennonite Brethren missions in the Chaco were concerned primarily with the Lengua and Chulupi Indians, other tribes were not forgotten.

The Guarani people have played a significant role in the history of Paraguay, as is evident from the widespread use of their dialect. In the Chaco, however, their contacts with the Mennonites were not as a separate group, but along with the Lengua and Chulupi, usually near or in Colony centers. Thus references to the Guaranies in the various reports are indeed sparse. The most informative reference appeared in a report to the Paraguayan Mennonite Brethren Conference in 1970, and reads:

In five different places, scattered in the Fernheim Colony, live about 350 Guarani Indians in groups of different sizes. The work among them was started a few years ago, but it came to a halt when the missionary changed jobs. Officially the work was taken up again in June of this year by the Harry Unruhs, only a month and a half before this report. The work is quite new and requires courage and persistence on the part of the missionary.³¹

The Toba Indians, like the Guaranies, were contacted for the Gospel along with the Lengua people in the mission centers. There must have been enough affinity in language and culture between the Tobas and the Lenguas so that the former could be integrated into the church life of the latter. The Mennonite Brethren missionaries did not sense any tensions between these two in a church setting, and consequently the missionaries were glad to have them there.

The work with the Moro Indians has been recorded in some detail for us elsewhere.³² These aborigines made several unexpected attacks on Mennonite settlements, often leaving a trail of blood and death behind. Repeated attempts to contact them proved unsuccessful, with the Indians misunderstanding the intentions of the missionaries. In one of these attempts in 1958 Kornelius Isaak, one of the missionaries, was fatally speared by the people he wanted to win. On his deathbed he earnestly prayed for these people who

needed the Gospel so much. Later this work was turned over to the New Tribes Mission, who had made previous contact with these people in Bolivia and had now come to work with them in this area.

Inter-church Relationships: Even though the relationship between Mennonites and Indians in 1969 could be generally described as good, the Indian is more and more beginning to show an awareness of his rights. Thus at times he is less cordial. Whereas he used to oblige the Mennonites quite freely, he now is less ready to do so. Two factors, evident in the relationship existing in 1960, are still quite noticeable:

(a) The feeling of superiority on the part of the white man. He still is largely the employer, the trainer, and, to some extent, the guardian of the Indian.

(b) The feeling of inferiority on the part of the Indian. Although the Lengua Indian society was a very free one, he was compelled to change from a life of spontaneous freedom to one in which the rights of others limited his movements and often his actions as well. Now he must work in order to eat and live. He now "must" assume greater responsibility for his family of six to seven children.³³

This spirit also carried over into the churches. The Mennonite churches supported the mission at great sacrifice, but not altogether without feelings of condescension. A missionary relationship with nationals is indeed a vital affair, but thoughts of full integration are distant. It is indeed questionable whether attempts at integration now would not be premature. But a greater awareness of equality in Christ and acceptance of the Indian as a brother is growing.

In reflecting upon the influence of Mennonite Brethren missions upon these Indians, we cannot but marvel at what has been accomplished. With no missionary personnel from North America on the field today, the Mennonite Brethren Church in Paraguay is showing commendable dedication and ability in carrying on the work. The maturing Indian church is almost completely indigenous except in the area of leadership training. Such results in culture change and spiritual awakening are indeed, as Dr. G.W.

Peters has said, "...a modern miracle of evangelism and civilization. The labors are not in vain. We praise God for it."³⁴

THE THRUST INTO SPANISH-SPEAKING AREAS

The outreach to the Spanish-speaking population is centered primarily in Asunción. It began in 1955, when Albert Enns walked from home to home, asking people for their permission to send them evangelical literature. Eighty people gave him their addresses, receiving further visits. This work grew with the help of Hans Wiens, so that 150 addresses were secured, a house was rented and dedicated, and services in one of the larger rooms begun. The year 1955 ended with an evangelistic campaign and two converts.

While the Board favored a small beginning and growth on an indigenous basis, the missionaries recommended the purchase of facilities large enough to house the church as well as a Bible school for Spanish Christians. Through the years, vacation Bible school and evangelistic campaigns provided a recurring thrust into the community. People were saved, particularly in the "Hospital de Clinicas" area. The first baptism of two persons was held in 1956, and a second one with five candidates in January, 1959. Some property was purchased that year and regular Sunday morning services begun. Another ten people were baptized in October, and the new church engaged Br. Caballero as its fulltime worker.

Although the church membership remained at 21 for some time, the attendance did build up to between 70 and 80 on Sundays, with some 30 to 40 at the mid-week service.

In 1961 there was a reinforcement of workers. The Rudolf Pletts joined the missionary force, while Mary Esther Martens and Miriam Janzen, the latter two from North America, came to teach in an English school in the city.

The completion and dedication of the new church building generated even greater response from the community. A

second place of worship was thus selected, with 40 to 50 people in attendance.

The children of believers were under a real disadvantage in the Catholic-dominated school system, and the need for a Christian elementary school became evident. Furthermore, to establish new converts in the faith and to train church workers a Bible school also seemed necessary.

The missionaries suggested that both of these schools be started in an as yet unevangelized area of the city, since this would also create another place of worship. Hans Wiens was recommended as director. All of these proposals the Board approved.

Newly-converted couples, encouraged by the missionaries, were beginning Bible studies in their homes. Thirteen evangelistic campaigns were also conducted during those three years, resulting in 128 decisions for Christ. By 1966, the membership had risen to 95. In 1968, another preaching point was added, consisting of believers who as yet had not been organized into a church. The Bible institute was expected to give birth to another church. On May 1, 1971, the four established churches and four other preaching places, with a total of 135 members, gathered to form a convention in which the total evangelistic potential was to be harnessed for further expansion.

The work in Asunción has not developed without testings and struggles. In 1957 the postmen did not want to deliver letters which contained evangelical literature. The Catholic priest used the newspapers and radio to call for the enforcement of a 1947 decree which required all non-Catholic churches to confine their activities to their church buildings. He failed in his efforts. Yet the most painful reversals came when converts reverted to their old way of life, or when church members had to be disciplined. But such reverses did not stop the work of God.

The strategy proposed for the future is as follows: A target area is to be selected, preferably a new inland city (or perhaps a new city sector of Asuncion). No missionary will reside there, but a team will go out for an evangelistic crusade lasting about three to four weeks. Then the new converts will be instructed in the Word and guided into a

fellowship where they will be nurtured, become a church, evangelize, and go out to start new churches.³⁵ Such a crusade has already been conducted in San Estanislao and Villaricea with gratifying results. This approach resembles that of "Saturation Evangelism" and is designed to multiply churches.

LOCAL CHURCH OUTREACH

Neuland Colony lies south of Fernheim and has Paraguayan neighbors on three sides. Contact with these often forgotten people awakened a sense of responsibility in a number of believers in Neuland and fanned a desire to evangelize them.

This was particularly evident in the village of Waldrode, a southern village of the Colony. In 1962 families invited neighbors for a Christmas celebration. They repeated this for several years, giving small gifts to the children of the families who came. The Neuland Mennonite Brethren Church heard of this work and began to help in the purchase of these gifts.

In 1964 the church decided to explore the possibility of a mission to these people. Gerhard Ratzlaff, studying in a seminary in Buenos Aires at the time, was asked to come home during his vacation and make an investigation. He was encouraged to conduct vacation Bible school in various areas. The participation in these schools and the interest shown by parents motivated the church to ask Ratzlaff to continue the work.

Ratzlaff accepted a teaching position in the elementary school in Waldrode in 1965. The church provided a house for Ratzlaff to live in, two large tents for use in services in various areas, as well as a buggy and horse.

The Neuland Church engaged Ratzlaff as a full-time worker in 1968 and bought a special jeep for his ministry. When the Ratzlaffs left the Colony in 1969, the Harry Unruhs were engaged to continue the work.

In view of the limited resources at the disposal of the Neuland Church, we perceive in the above effort a sincere expression of the missionary spirit which has so often characterized the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Friesland: Less than a year (June, 1938) after the Colony had been settled, the Friesland church had planned a mission festival to stimulate the spirit for missions. At the festival many were reminded of their Paraguayan neighbors, especially in the Catholic stronghold of San Estanislao, a city of 5,000 inhabitants only 45 kilometers from Friesland.³⁶ Eventually Arndt Funk began ministering to many patients with leprosy, but he could not do justice to the spiritual challenge in the community for lack of time. The church prayed for a worker and the Lord made Harold Funk willing to assist.

The new spiritual thrust began in November, 1964. The following summer the workers conducted a Vacation Bible School, although there had been some earlier efforts.

In January, 1957, for example, H. Wiens had conducted a six-week Bible school which was well received. Harold Funk and Hans Pankratz had visited many homes in 1957. After these initial efforts, C. C. Peters as well as Gerhard Sukkau, encouraged the church to do something for their Paraguayan friends. The Board of General Welfare and Public Relations had promised financial help in the effort. After 1965, H. Funk conducted regular Sunday services, made many home visits and distributed gospel literature. In 1966 Alfred Klassen replaced H. Funk, and in January, 1967, reported that they had again conducted vacation Bible school, distributed about 300 pieces of literature, and made 100 house visitations monthly. They also had conducted a successful evangelistic campaign.

The church acquired a suitable building for its services and provided another house for the missionary. The Catholic priests sought to hinder the work by denouncing the Protestants over loudspeakers and distributing leaflets against their cause. However, the police did not hinder them and the work continued unhampered. No church has yet been organized.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 4

PARAGUAY

1. After years of seemingly fruitless labor among the Indians of the Choco, a mass movement, sometimes referred to as a people's movement, began. Many turned to Christ. This raises several questions relating to mission planning.
 - a) How long should a witness be maintained among un-receptive people before transferring missionaries and finances to more fruitful fields?
 - b) When people decide as a group (family, lineage, or tribe) to become Christians, are the people saved? What does their decision mean in the light of the normal decision-making and communicative processes in a tribe? What implications do such movements have for our theology of conversion?
 - c) In the light of contemporary mission strategy, should missionaries discourage people movements? If not, what are the critical tasks that they face, and the dangers against which they must guard, in order to build a living church?
 - d) In people movements individuals often have a mixture of economic, social and psychological, as well as religious, motives for becoming Christians. How does this fit with our Mennonite Brethren theology of conversion? To what extent should the mission be concerned with the economic and social development of the people, and their felt need for a new cultural identity?
 - e) In their search for a new Christian culture after leaving their old religious beliefs, the people draw both from their cultural past and from new ideas brought in by the missionaries. To what extent should the missionaries encourage them to draw from their past customs? Should they be encouraged to keep their dress (or lack of it), their old songs, their traditional patterns of leadership, or their family systems (which may be polygamous)? Or should the missionaries seek to change as much of the culture as possible? Can many of the

people's traditional cultural patterns, and even religious rituals, be given new meanings in the Christian community? What are the advantages and dangers in drawing from the people's cultural past, and who should make the decisions regarding what new form the culture of the national church should take?

f) Should marriage between Christians and non-Christians be discouraged in a rapidly christianizing tribe? What theological and strategical issues are involved in choosing a policy in this matter?

g) What are some of the channels of communication by which the Gospel may be spread in a tribe, and how do these differ from those in a modern city or town?

2. In some ways the mission work in Paraguay was unique, since it involved the North American churches, the Paraguayan Mennonite colonies, and the Paraguayan (Spanish-speaking) churches. What are some of the problems that have arisen in trying to organize working relationships between these bodies? How does the presence of the Mennonite colonies affect BOMAS's plan for the indigenization of the Spanish-speaking churches? Some have suggested that the ideal course of missionizing a country is by having Christians move as colonists to a country and live there. Discuss the pros and cons of such a strategy.

5

JOINT EFFORTS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

In Brazil, Colombia, and Paraguay the Mennonite Brethren assumed primary responsibility for the work, following the conventional mission methods of resident workers, evangelism and institutional development. In several other countries, such as Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, they cooperated with other mission boards or sought to develop new approaches to the spread of the Gospel. As is the case in joint efforts and new approaches, there has been a great deal of discussion and negotiation regarding the nature of the mission program, leading to a re-evaluation of the basic tasks of missions.

ECUADOR

The World Radio Missionary Fellowship, founded by Clarence W. Jones and Reuben Larsen, negotiated an arrangement with the Government of Ecuador to erect a missionary broadcasting station. HCJB released its first gospel program over its 250-watt transmitter on December 25, 1931. This station, known as HCJB (Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings), or the Voice of the Andes, has its studios close to the city of Quito. It has increased in scope and strength until today it broadcasts with 6 transmitters, 19 antennas in Pifo (19 miles east of Quito) and with 1850 KW of electric power. It releases 370 hours of programs per week in 15 different languages.

MENNONITE BRETHREN INVOLVEMENT

One of the broadcast languages is German, the language used by many Mennonite Brethren in North America and also by those who migrated to South America. When HCJB

asked BOMAS to accept responsibility for staffing the German Department in its worldwide ministry, there was an enthusiastic response in North America.

By agreement, all longterm personnel at HCJB would actually serve two masters. They would be responsible to their supporting Board, but at the same time also to WRMF for directives in the work. After working at HCJB for years, one missionary wrote:

Very cordial relations exist between WRMF, Inc. and the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services. While on the field, the missionary of the German staff is completely under the jurisdiction of the WRMF, Inc. and when on furlough, is responsible to the Hillsboro office.¹

The Rev. and Mrs. David Nightingale arrived as the first Mennonite Brethren workers at HCJB in 1953. They were followed by the Rev. and Mrs. Hugo Jantz and Miss Sally Schroeder, who arrived in 1957 to assist in the expanding ministry. Later the Peter Hueberts assumed responsibility for the work. Mary Wiens came for 1964-1970. H. Borns served 1969-1971. The Corny Balzers have served since 1971.

At first there were only two German releases a day, but because of growing demands from listeners, the number increased rapidly. By 1969 there were forty-two weekly programs.

The content of each program was also carefully checked against the interest and needs expressed in the mail received. A "Kinderstuebchen" for children, "Frauenstunde" for women, "Altenstunde" for the aged, "Jugendprogram" for youth and even a special program to reach the DX'ers,* was produced and released. About 60 percent of the programs were produced by the personnel of the German Department, 17 percent were made available by *Licht des Evangeliums* and *Quelle des Lebens*, and the rest were released by other radio missions who also paid for radio time.

* Short wave listeners for technical reasons.

RESPONSE TO RADIO OUTREACH

In radio broadcasting effectiveness must be measured to a great extent by letter response. The first year of German broadcasting by the Mennonite Brethren staff brought 164 letters. The number steadily increased and reached a total of 11,890 in 1968. Figures I and II picture both the increase of response through the years, as well as the percentage of the response that comes from each listening area. Offers of various types of appropriate literature, calendars, and other items stimulated the listeners to write. Visits by German department staff members to countries with a specially heavy mail response invariably resulted in a renewed influx. A closer study of mail response reveals that each time a change in personnel in Quito occurred, the number of letters temporarily declined until new loyalties developed.

FOLLOW-UP

Most broadcasters are concerned about effective follow-up. David Nightingale and co-workers repeatedly asked for permission to visit areas most effectively reached by the broadcasts. BOMAS approved the trip. David Nightingale then visited the southern provinces of Brazil, parts of Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay in June and July, 1962. He reported that:

a. Radio is not confined to any particular social or religious group, crossing social as well as denominational barriers.

b. Though radio reaches many in urban settings, it appeals even more to people in rural areas.

c. Personal contact with listeners alone can help a radio minister understand the actual spiritual needs of his audience.

d. Radio opens the doors of non-evangelical churches through listeners who persuade the pastor to admit the radio minister.

e. Radio stimulates interdenominational relationships as people from various denominations interact at radio rallies.

JOINT EFFORTS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

MAIL RESPONSE

INCREASE! WHY?

MORE:

RADIO-TIME
POWER
FOLLOW-UP

DECREASE! WHY?

PERSONNEL CHANGE
POOR RECEPTION

164 Letters

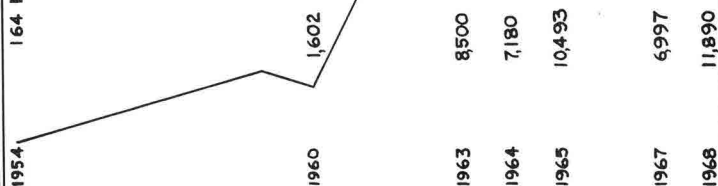
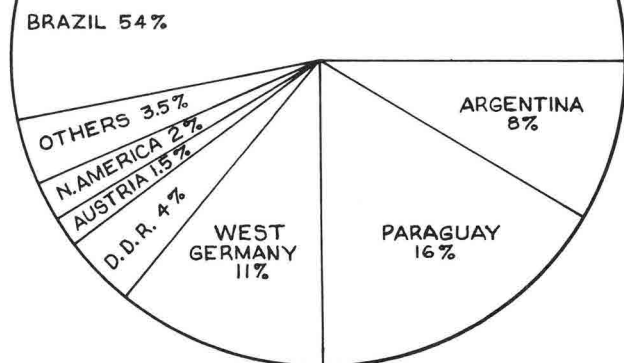


FIGURE I
FIGURE II

INCOMING MAIL DISTRIBUTION IN % 1968



f. Radio can effectively counteract certain sects such as Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and others as they seek to impose themselves on spiritually seeking persons.

g. Radio does fulfill a significant teaching ministry by covering biblical truths often neglected by local churches.

h. Radio missions need to be more diligent in follow-up work.

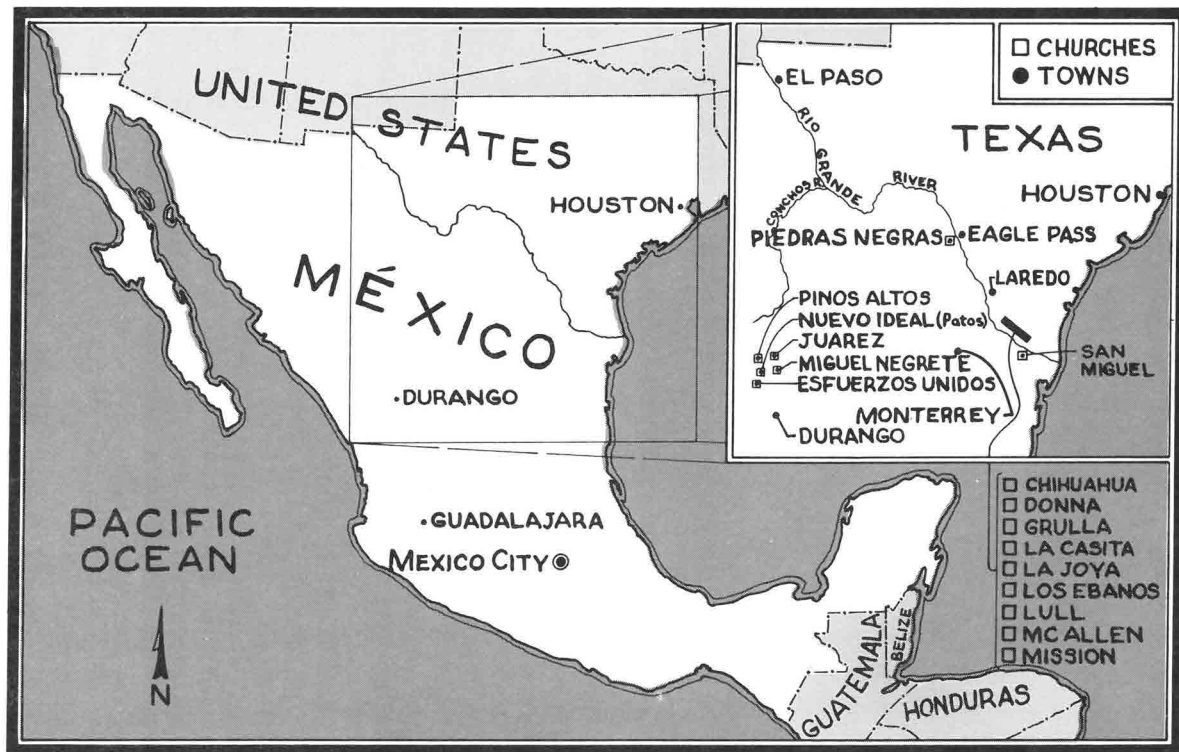
In addition to periodic field visits by radio personnel, Nightingale saw the following possibilities for more effective follow-up work: (a) Radio personnel can point out to evangelical churches people who have a need and could profit from personal contacts; (b) Radio personnel can identify areas where there is a concentration of interested listeners. An evangelical mission board can then send messengers to such areas to nurture them, and, if necessary, start a new church; (c) Radio Bible correspondence courses could be used to start local Bible study groups.²

The potential of radio follow-up loomed so large in the mind of Nightingale that after completing his studies in North America he moved to southern Brazil for more survey work and church planting in Joinville, one of several urban situations where radio had prepared the way.

MEXICO

Mexico and its almost 50 million people could not be overlooked by Mennonite Brethren Missions. Though Roman Catholicism is dominant in the land, it "is so mixed with the original paganism that it is almost indistinguishable from it" in many Indian territories.

In 1857 the constitution of Mexico decreed that no foreign clergy would be permitted to function in an official capacity in any ecclesiastical institution of the Roman Catholic Church. This restriction also applied to Protestant missions. The latter were also forbidden to evangelize, often experiencing opposition from fanatical Roman Catholics. Nevertheless, the latest figures report 701,510 Protestants in Mexico.³



JOINT EFFORTS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

BEGINNINGS IN MEXICO

Protestant missions first came to Mexico in the middle of the nineteenth century with the American Bible Society, which distributed copies of the Scriptures during the Mexico-United States War (1846-1848). A school for Mexicans was started by Miss Malinda Ranki at Brownsville, Texas, in 1852, and transferred to Monterrey, Mexico, three years later. In 1873 this mission came under the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Missionaries of other denominations soon followed.

BOMAS first considered Mexico in 1950 in response to a plea from Isaac Goertz from Canada, who had visited his relatives among the Old Colony Mennonites in the states of Chihuahua and Durango. These Mennonites left Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the 1920s to escape the "worldly" influence of compulsory education. Goertz reported that they had lost all spiritual vitality and urged BOMAS to establish a witness among them.

BOMAS responded favorably to the challenge, but had to overcome several difficulties in doing so. The laws of Mexico did not permit missionaries to enter the country, but would allow people to enter on an immigration visa for professional or vocational purposes. For this reason, BOMAS urged the Board of Trustees of the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren to purchase farm land to enable some missionaries to enter Mexico as farmers. The Board of Trustees complied with the request, and Mr. and Mrs. David H. Toews of Fairview, Oklahoma, arrived in 1950 to work the land and establish contacts with the Mennonites.

BOMAS also purchased a doctor's complex, with space for a clinic so nurses could enter to minister to the Mennonites and witness to them. Edna Thiessen arrived in 1950, followed by Maria Schulz and others. This clinic, particularly its maternity ward, met a special need among Mennonite women, who had been deprived of medical assistance in childbirth.

MISSIONS TO THE MENNONITES

The medical ministry proved most successful in attracting these Mennonites. Many of them also appreciated hymn singing, and a few responded to the Word as they attended church services and Sunday school. But those who personally accepted Christ by faith were immediately placed under the "ban" and suffered excommunication from their church.

The Old Colony Church elders applied severe ecclesiastical pressure and social and economic restraints to keep their people away from the newcomers. The door to the Old Colony Mennonites thus continued to be difficult to open. The few families who responded and believed had to leave the colony and find a livelihood elsewhere. Thus in spite of all the efforts over a period of 20 years no group of believers has arisen.

MISSIONS TO MEXICANS

Because of the resistant attitude of the Mennonites, particularly the church elders, the Mennonite Brethren missionaries refocused their efforts and turned to the Mexicans. They learned Spanish and initiated Bible studies and church services. The nationals responded, but this approach aroused Catholic opposition. On September 16, 1953, the missionaries were ordered to leave Nuevo Ideal. But the missionaries risked staying, with no ill effects. By 1956 a church had come into being in Patos,* with a membership of 53 by 1957.

Several of the surrounding villages invited the missionaries to come and bring the Gospel to them, too. Thus groups of believers emerged in such villages as Esfuerzos Unidos, Pinos Altos, Benito Juarez and Miguel Negrete, all in the state of Durango.

Mission workers among the Mexicans in southern Texas had become acquainted with the Rev. I. M. Alaniz, who had begun a work in Piedras Negras. Alaniz felt strangely

* Patos and Nuevo Ideal are different names for the same town.

drawn to the Mennonite Brethren and transferred his membership from the Methodist to the Mennonite Brethren work, bringing his group with him as a new Mennonite Brethren church. BOMAS assisted Alaniz by helping him with a building and a partial salary. At first the work grew, but by 1960 those who attended were mostly women. Alaniz had also not been able to get the congregation to assume financial responsibility.

Similar work was started in San Miguel and Reynosa, but in neither case did it result in the emergence of an indigenous church.

In 1960 the church planting program in Mexico was thoroughly reviewed. It was agreed by both missionaries and leading nationals that a greater effort should be made in larger population centers. Such cities as Hermosillo, Chihuahua City, Durango City, Monterrey, San Luis Potosi, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Villa Hermosa, and Merida were considered. However, in only a few of the above centers was work actually begun, though two need mention.

When the Dan Petkers returned to Mexico in 1961 they were placed in Durango City. Other missionaries came to assist them. Fanatical Catholicism made Durango a difficult field, but after a year a number of families had responded and a sizable fellowship of believers had been established. However, what appears to be a premature shift of missionaries to assignments elsewhere did not allow this group to mature and become a strong church.

In 1965 national leaders requested the Petkers to start a work in Monterrey. Here the Petkers tried to reach the "middle class" and made many personal contacts by visitation and participation in community activities, such as Parent Teacher Associations and Cub Scouts. Yet no permanent results had been achieved by the time the Petkers returned to the United States in 1967.

The Willie Heinrichs and Richard Wienses, two other Mennonite Brethren missionary couples, were asked to go to Guadalajara in 1968 to initiate a work there. They initiated a film ministry and sought to establish home Bible study groups. This approach appeared promising and is

still being utilized by the Richard Wienses. The Heinrichs have since returned to the United States. Although no church has as yet been established, the Wienses are hopeful that this may soon be possible.

After 20 years of mission work (1950-1970) in Mexico we can report that in 1970 there were five Mennonite Brethren churches, four of which had national pastors subsidized by BOMAS. They report a total of 88 baptized believers, a total average attendance of 149 in Sunday school, and 135 in the Sunday services.

BIBLE SCHOOL IN MEXICO

Almost from the beginning the need for a Bible school to establish young Christians in the faith was recognized. By 1954 the Mexican field had four young people studying in other Bible schools. BOMAS gave high priority to the establishment of such an institution and made provisions accordingly. A school opened in 1954 with 20 students, and in 1956 the enrollment reached 32. The students also became engaged in practical evangelism and proved a great encouragement to the various groups of believers in the villages of the Nuevo Ideal area.

However, legal restrictions hindered missionary leadership in the institution. It became evident that any further work in Mexico would have to be done by workers possessing legal papers. Since no missionaries qualified, and suitable national talent was not available, the school had to be closed. This event crippled the missionary program seriously, since leaders could not be trained.

THE MEXICAN MENNONITE BRETHREN CONFERENCE

From the very beginning the mission work in Mexico was handicapped because of legal restrictions. Therefore the national church needed to be incorporated as soon as possible, so it could legally hold deeds of property acquired by the Mission. BOMAS voted to incorporate the church as *Sociedad de la Amistad, A.C.*, a non-profit civil society.

This society became dormant in time. When the maternity clinic was set up, an effort was made to reactivate the society. Yet since the *Sociedad de la Amistad* was a non-profit entity, it could not operate a self-sustaining venture such as the maternity center. Thus in 1962 the decision was made to form a *Sociedad Civil*, which though neither non-profit nor commercial would be qualified to operate a self-sustaining clinic. This organization was to consist of from three to five Mexican brethren who could hold property.⁴

Several complications evolved from this dual structure. Some national brethren were involved in both societies and did not always understand their respective roles in a given situation. Furthermore, the members of the *Sociedad Civil* required long hours of work from the missionary nurses, barring them administrative roles in the clinic. This situation caused BOMAS to withdraw its missionaries, and the clinic closed in December of 1969.

In the meantime, the functions of the *Sociedad de la Amistad* became more and more blurred. In 1963 new interest in the creation of a National Mennonite Brethren Conference which would concern itself primarily with evangelism and church planting developed. The committee which was to guide this new conference consisted of four national brethren and two missionaries. This committee would have direct access to BOMAS and make the Missionary Administrative Committee obsolete. Yet even with this new structure misunderstandings and tensions developed so much that the working relationship suffered. BOMAS eventually felt constrained to withdraw its missionaries from Mexico.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

In reviewing the course of Mennonite Brethren missions in Mexico we note the following factors:

- a. Mexican legal restrictions on foreigners complicated the beginning and further development of the work.
- b. The absence of a continuous theological institution to train national leaders for the work constituted a great weakness in the missionary effort.

c. There was a definite lack of concentration in the mission program. Not only were loyalties somewhat divided between the Mennonites and the Mexican people, but the work was spread so thinly over a wide area in Mexico that it was difficult to develop strength at any one point.

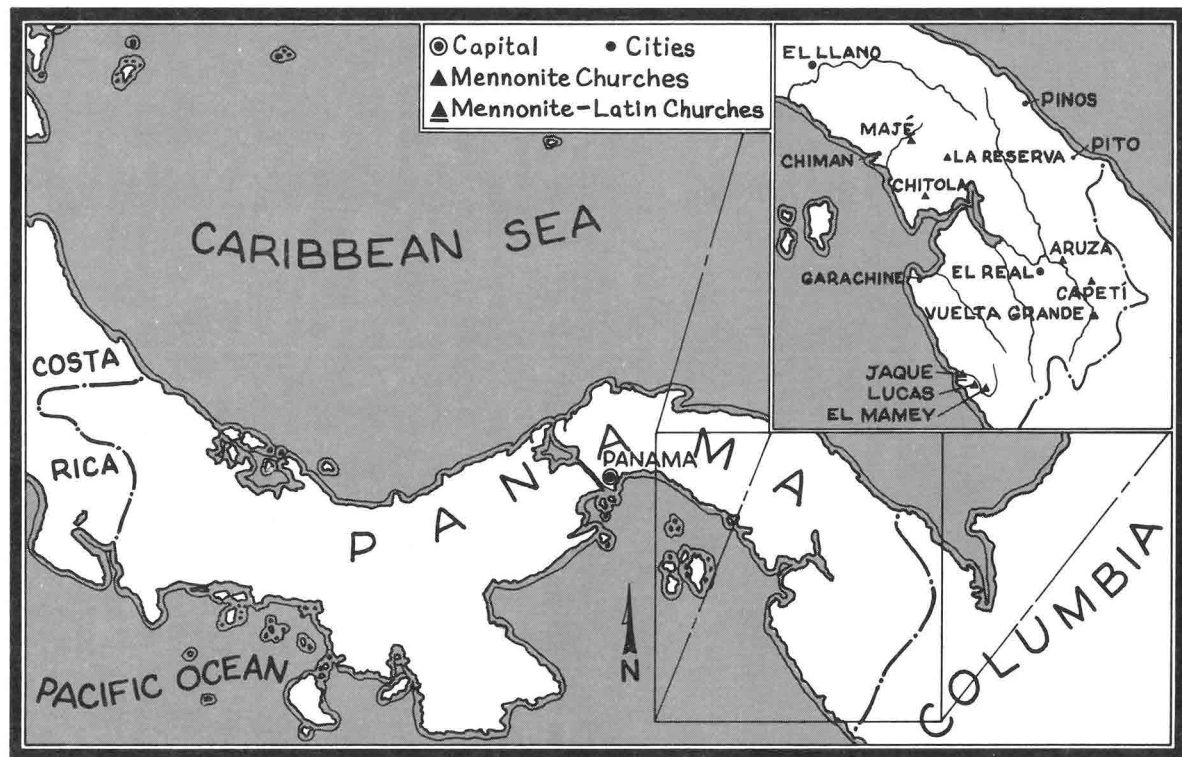
d. Instability in any missionary work greatly hinders the maturing of a national church. In Mexico, Mennonite Brethren missionary personnel moved from place to place before a national church had been born and had learned to walk and work. This excessive mobility of missionaries was not a peculiar weakness of the missionary, however. BOMAS and the national conference moved personnel around so much that the desired mobility became instability, causing the work to suffer.

NEW HOPE FOR MEXICO

Lasting results from the more than 20 years of missionary work in Mexico are difficult to evaluate. The Richard Wienses, however, have continued their labors in Mexico on their own, even after BOMAS withdrew. Thus, old entangled structures and misunderstood relationships have been eliminated. BOMAS has reinstated the Richard Wienses, and their work appears to be the beginning of a new day for Mennonite Brethren missions in Mexico.

Miss Maria Schulz, R.N., has continued a medical ministry to many Mennonites apart from the clinic that closed. Her witness was augmented for a time by the spiritual ministry of the J.W. Vogts, a veteran missionary couple from Europe already in their seventies. Succeeding them were Leslie and Erlene Mark, who had served in Mexico under the American Advent Mission Society from 1960 until they enrolled in the M.B. Biblical Seminary in the early '70s. The Richard Wienses and the Marks worked closely together for several years in Guadalajara, Mexico, and the arrival of this experienced couple significantly strengthens the Mennonite Brethren outreach.

God has often wrought a glorious victory when defeat was so near. There are clear indications that God may do this also with Mennonite Brethren missions in Mexico.



JOINT EFFORTS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

PANAMA

In the section on Colombia we noted that Mennonite Brethren entered the Choco in 1948 and showed special interest in the Noanama or Waunana Indians. Diligent efforts were made to start a work among them. But because of the Concordat, an agreement signed in 1928 between Colombia and the Roman Catholic Church that remained in force for some 25 years, the Choco was designated as mission territory for the Roman Catholics. This decree gave the church a monopoly over education, evangelism, and medical services in that area. Thus the Choco was "out of bounds" to Protestant missions.

The same Indians who were so inaccessible in Colombia had relatives and friends living in Panama, and many of those from Colombia actually migrated to Panama. Thus, Panama offered an alternative to the closed doors in Colombia. The aim now became that of establishing a beachhead in Panama and from there reaching onto the Colombian Choco.

BEGINNINGS IN PANAMA

BOMAS showed some reluctance to shift its operational base for the Indians from Colombia to Panama for two reasons. It preferred to consolidate its missionary thrust in one country. It also was concerned about violating comity* arrangements existing in Panama. But since the Mennonite Brethren missionaries involved in reaching these Indians requested an opportunity to continue their work, BOMAS, after repeated deliberations, came to view its commitment to the Choco Indians of Colombia as a responsibility to "a people rather than a field,"⁵ and felt at liberty to explore new possibilities.

A cooperative basis for a witness to the Indians was negotiated with the Foursquare Mission and the New Tribes Mission, both already working among them in the Darien

*An agreement between missions to divide up the country so as not to duplicate one another's efforts.

Province of Panama. The Foursquare Mission chose the Sambu area as its field, while the New Tribes Mission moved to Jaque and its surrounding area. The Mennonite Brethren missionaries Jacob Loewen and David Wirsche were available to assist both with linguistic work and a church building program. Three different groups of people became the main benefactors of these efforts: the Epera Indians at El Mamey and Lucas; the Waunana Indians at Chitola; and the Spanish-speaking Negroes at Jaque.

The Mennonite Brethren personnel complemented each other in the work. J.A. Loewen functioned more as a linguist, translating and producing literature into the Indian dialects, while David Wirsche spent more time teaching the Indians to read and training the first reader to teach others to read. Glenn Prunty, a missionary working under the New Tribes Mission with support from Baptist and Community churches, found it difficult to agree with some requirements of his mission. He therefore terminated his services with it and made arrangements to work in cooperation with BOMAS. His support, however, continued to come from the churches that had financially supported him.

Loewen and Wirsche came to the field during summer months for specialized work, while Prunty served as the resident missionary to guide the work with counsel and assistance while the others were absent. The involvement of BOMAS remained indirect, with the field committee, consisting largely of the personnel directly involved, assuming most of the administrative responsibility. Since the project involved the pioneering of new mission methods, negotiations were necessary to develop strategies and working relationships.

MISSION METHODOLOGY IN PANAMA

From the outset an attempt was made to develop a new and internally consistent philosophy and strategy for mission work in a tribal group and to develop the program in accord with this. Several principles were outlined, of which the following are primary examples.

The Literacy Program: Loewen had made a study of the

various dialects used by the Indians in the Choco, identifying at least ten dialects or distinct languages. Two thousand five hundred Choco Indians spoke the Waunana language, while most of the rest of the Indians, calling themselves Eperana, had "at least nine dialects, many of which are not mutually intelligible."⁶

The government educational program with the Indians had stressed the Spanish language without too much success, and in several instances had abandoned the effort. The failure to master the Spanish language made the Indians appear inferior in the government schools. Thus they came to be known as "stupid savages."⁷ The missionaries, however, reduced the Indian dialect to writing by using Spanish orthography. It was now much easier for the Indians to learn to read the Spanish language.

Realizing that a literacy program can easily become merely a socializing effort, the missionaries stated that their objective was

to teach the Indians to read their own language utilizing graded readers, with the ultimate objective that they learn to read the Bible stories and the portions of Scripture which have been translated into their language. Nothing less than to read the Scriptures fluently and with understanding can be the goal and purpose of the literacy program.⁸

It was obvious that the missionary could not reach the scattered 5,000 Choco Indians and teach them to read. "Therefore a realistic and indigenous literacy program with an inclusive perspective must be based on the premise that the recently literate must be the teacher of his own fellows."⁹

The selection of students had to be carefully made, since in the Indian culture pattern, "it is the head of the house who promotes or stifles progress or change, spiritual or otherwise."¹⁰ The discovery of this principle helped the missionaries concentrate on the head of the house or the chief of a locality for involvement and promotion of the literacy program. One of the outstanding students was Aureliano Sabugara, who not only continued to read, but actually conducted reading classes preparing people with reading readiness for the next literacy program.¹¹

Several programs exemplify the problem and progress possible. The 1961 literacy program in El Mamey, for example, proved at times discouraging as the Indians responded at irregular hours, in an informal setting, and with much discussion of the new truth learned rather than with an aggressive effort to acquire the reading skill. Nevertheless, at the end of the period, 24 individuals had been taught, with six attaining the Bible story reading level.

At Lucas the goodwill of the chief was solicited successfully. Jesus Reyes, one of the new Indian readers, taught eight people, with one reaching the Bible story reading level, two Reader IV level and the rest the Reader III level.

In Jaque in 1961 David Wirsche had the opportunity to teach the first Waunana Indian, Daniel Osorio, to read. He in turn taught some of the Epera Indians to read. As a result of this experience ethnic barriers between the two tribes were broken down. At the end, the Waunana and Epera Indians embraced each other. Similar accomplishments could be reported for both the Chepo and Sambu areas, for Waunana as well as Epera Indians.

One significant advantage of the program is that an Indian teaching others the same skill confirms himself in his skill while spreading the reading ability to many others.

The Sponsorship Concept: Too often the missionary in his approach has imposed himself and his message on the people whom he comes to serve. The missionaries in Panama sought to avoid this by searching for some person in the community to sponsor them as his guests. In doing so, these missionaries wanted to follow the example of Paul in Philippi, where Lydia became his sponsor (Acts 16:14-15), or in Corinth, where Aquilla and Priscilla sponsored him as their guest (Acts 18:1-11).

When David Wirsche came to Lucas to introduce his reading program, he first approached the chief. He replied, "If you want to accept us as your authority, that is good. We will help you. We will give you a home where you can stay. We will tell you which people will be good teachers in our community, and we will help you get the program started."¹²

The indigenous church also employed this principle. The newly-organized church at El Mamey took an inventory of friends in other communities who would invite some of the members of the church to come and bring the Gospel. As a point of contact for the Gospel the El Mamey church also contacted Waunana Indians in the Chado River area who had married Choco women. Again, when Aureliano encountered a group of Indians from an unreached area, he solicited an invitation from the leader of the group.

The principle of employing a sponsor may not be feasible in all cases, but it is certainly worth noting as an application of a principle not previously used in Mennonite Brethren missions. It can often be used to great advantage.

The Non-Resident Missionary: The term "non-resident missionary" may sound unusual, but this is the term that best describes the involvement of Loewen and Wirsche in Panama. These missionaries were on the field for a short visit of from several weeks to two months each year. During the rest of the year they worked at their professions in North America or elsewhere. While on the field they taught and proposed new ventures. They left the scene and observed the progress of the work from without. At first one foresees only the disadvantages of such an arrangement. But Loewen notes the following advantages:

a. Each visit must have clear-cut (obtainable) short-term objectives.

b. The program has to produce results visible enough to provide incentive to the Indians to develop them further, (and convince the sponsoring agency to finance the next visit).

c. One must keep a detailed account of what actually transpires.

d. There must, of necessity, be frequent periods of evaluation.

e. The national leader has opportunity to implement what he has learned (and thus learns by doing as well as by hearing).

f. The authority of the church becomes more central in view of the frequent absences of the missionary.¹³

But there are also certain disadvantages. A non-resident missionary can serve as a catalyst and introduce people to a redemptive relationship with Christ, but may find it more difficult to serve as a brother and guide new believers into the deeper life of Christ. This function was served by Prunty, who stayed with believers in Panama. The field visit arranged by the Board for Harold Fehderau and R. M. Baerg expressed the concern that "the residence of a strongly church-building minded missionary on the field should greatly facilitate an effective administration."¹⁴

Planting Churches: Church planting in Panama depended more directly on the initiative of nationals as a result of the new mission methodology. For example, during his visit to the United States in 1960, Aureliano Sabugara received a new vision of what a church should be. After his return, he endeavored to fulfill that vision in El Mamey among the Epera Indians.

When the missionary brethren came for their visit in the summer of 1961, they witnessed the completion of a church building, 18 by 27 feet in size. They attended the dedication on July 2, the day the first Indian church with 33 believers was organized. Brother Sabugara became the leader of the church, and three more people were baptized. An offering was taken which was sufficient to cover all debts and leave a balance for missionary work in Colombia. On the day following the dedication, the first missionary, Jesus Reyes, left for Lucas to begin to teach reading, conduct Bible reading and prayer meetings, and encourage the believers there to organize a local church. By 1962 this church had about 50 baptized believers.

On February 3, 1963, Prunty and believers from El Mamey made their first trip up the Chitola River, where they found 19 Waunana houses clustered together in village-like fashion. They initiated a program of reading instruction designed to win them to Christ. A total of 28 accepted Christ as Saviour. This experience helped the Epera Indians to realize that they could initiate reading campaigns in another language, just as missionary Wirsche could do for the Eperas without knowing how to speak their language. By 1966 there was a group of 50 baptized believers in

Chitola, with another 14 added the following year. This was the beginning of the work among the Waunana Indians.

Teodocio Murille, one of the Foursquare people in Jaque, attended the dedication service at El Mamey on July 2 and was so moved that he said to Prunty, "Would to God that something like this could come to pass among us!" Prunty encouraged him to let God use him in Jaque. After this experience, Teodocio returned to Jaque with real vision and zeal. Aureliano had worked in Jaque earlier and baptized ten believers and Glenn Prunty had baptized eight. Teodocio now called the believers together and 15 went with him to the Mennonite Brethren workers to ask for help. These workers challenged the believers in Jaque to demonstrate genuine discipleship, unity in the election of a leader, and in building of a sanctuary, and willingness to supplement the income of their self-employed leader. These efforts resulted in fellowship in 1963, with 50 members.

In the spring of 1969, the following statistics were reported: Chitola has 69 members; El Mamey, 75; Lucas, 60; and Jaque, 65; for a total of 269 members. This represents a church growth of 234 percent over a period of six years. By March, 1973, the total membership was 481.

Reaching the Choco Indians in Colombia: Again and again BOMAS was concerned that the original objective of reaching the Indians in Colombia be brought into sharper focus. In 1962 the Board thought that bringing one of the missionaries and a national from Colombia to Panama could be a beginning of "a closer association between the church development in Colombia and Panama with a view of the further evangelization of Waunana Indians in the Choco."¹⁵

Reimer and Quiring, missionaries from Colombia, reviewed the relationship of Panama and Colombia at the time of their visit to Panama. They concluded "that Colombian pastors or workers not be sent to minister in Panama for the present, for two reasons: to avoid introducing the concept of salaried workers, and the Chocoanans (including Indians) have a peculiar dislike for the Colombians, especially the Indians of the Choco."¹⁶

In our study of this question we need to acknowledge

some visits by missionaries from Colombia, as well as Indians from Panama to their kin in Colombia. Reports also reveal that "quite a large number of Waunana Indians have come out of Colombia and settled in southern Panama. Evangelism is carried on among these with good results and schools are also planned for these newcomers. The office here is producing many readers in the Waunana language for these people."¹⁷

In the early 1970s these readers were again revised. This time it was done by a national, Chindia Pena, who had received some linguistic training.

Until the 1970s it appeared that the aim of reaching the Colombian Indians from Panama was somewhat unrealistic. Until that time only 5,000 of the 20,000 to 25,000 Indians had come to Panama and settled in scattered fashion in the Darien region. For a time the Waunanas, who were a minority group, were being absorbed into the Epera language group. Some efforts made in Panama to reach the Waunana immigrants yielded comparatively small results. But all this has since changed.

In the early 1970s new waves of migration of Waunana Indians from Colombia to Panama began largely for the following reasons:

- a. Much lower cost of living in Panama as compared with Colombia.
- b. The fear of spiritism, particularly the witch doctors, who were very active in Colombia.
- c. The religious freedom prevailing in Panama as over against the monopoly of the state church in Colombia.
- d. The search for legal status, which was difficult to gain in Colombia. Many had not been baptized by the Roman Catholic Church and therefore had no baptism certificate to prove their birth in Colombia. In Panama such a certificate is not required. Some new immigrants received their Panamanian papers in about three weeks from the time of application. In all, about 75 percent of the Waunanas have now migrated to Panama.

The coming of new immigrants to Panama also effected the church building efforts. In the new environment, and with renewed hope of economic progress, the Waunana

JOINT EFFORTS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL



Indians responded more freely to the Gospel. Work among them began to yield encouraging results. Between October, 1972, and March, 1973, 103 Waunanas were baptized. Church statistics showed the following membership among them: Chitola, 119; Maje, 39; Arusa, 52; Capet, 60; Vuelta Grande de Paya, 26; for a total of 296. Total membership in March, 1973, was 481 with 185 non-Waunana.

The work among the Eperanans has lost some of its vigor and a revival is sincerely desired. Internal unity and evangelistic concern need to be rekindled so that this group can also be reached for Christ.

Should present trends continue, one cannot but admit that the original intent of reaching the Choco Indians in Colombia from Panama is a real possibility. Thus the decision of BOMAS to shift its responsibility from a field to a people may well be justified by future events.

PERU

MISSION FIELD IN PERU

Mennonite Brethren in Peru concentrated their efforts on reaching the Campa Indians in the eastern jungles of the country's central region. While the number of Campa Indians has been estimated at 30,000,¹⁸ only about one-half live in reasonable proximity to Atalaya, a Spanish town near the area where the Urugamba and Tambo Rivers meet. El Encuentro, only about five miles away from this junction of the rivers, was the site where the mission started. For many years the Mennonite Brethren tried to reach the Campa Indians from here.

The Campas themselves have a semi-nomadic culture, living in clannish fashion with "an old family head forming the center of a small group consisting of his married children and their families."¹⁹ Sylvester Dirks, the first Mennonite Brethren missionary to these people, states that the Campas are a most hospitable people, who give the best to their guest. Dirks also reveals that:

Life for a primitive people is less complicated and more relaxed than it is for civilized man in modern

society. The native has few needs, having food, shelter and clothing, he desires little besides. Some groups get by with just food and shelter. The only clothing worn by an isolated group of Campas on the headwaters of the Perene is a piece of beaten tree bark suspended from a string around the waist.²⁰

Besides these Campa people, there are about ten to twelve thousand Spanish-speaking Peruvians in the area, many of whom live in small villages or towns such as Atalaya and Santa Rosa. These two towns thus became centers of the Spanish mission work done by the Mennonite Brethren in Peru.

THE KRIMMER MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS

The first contact with the Campa Indians, as far as Mennonite Brethren missions is concerned, was really made by Sylvester Dirks and his family under the auspices of the Wycliffe Bible Translators. The support for the Dirks and their work, however, came largely from their own church, the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church.*

Once on the field, Dirks did intensive linguistic research, beginning an analysis of the phonology and morphology of the complex, highly-agglutinative language of the Campas. Yet he also felt urged to evangelize them. However, the charter granted by the Peruvian government to the Wycliffe Translators did not provide for freedom to evangelize. Thus Dirks resigned from Wycliffe, hoping to return to Peru under the auspices of some other mission so that his denomination could become more directly involved. By faith he purchased a round-trip ticket from Lima to Chicago.

* The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren was a related Mennonite denomination which merged with the Mennonite Brethren Conference in 1960. For more specific identification of this Conference, see The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America, Centennial Conference and 48th Session, Yearbook, Reedley, California, 1960, pp. 26ff.

Dirks returned to Canada in January, 1949, and immediately began to negotiate with his denomination for his return. He also made application to Peru to return to that country for missionary purposes. Contrary to the expectations of many, Peru granted him an entrance permit. Consequently, the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Foreign Mission Board minutes indicate the following:

It was voted that inasmuch as the doors to Peru are open and the Dirkses are ready to go, we send them forth in view of establishing a field. We recommend that they go out independently, yet work in cooperation with the Missionary Alliance wherever necessary and advisable. ²¹

In June, 1950, the Dirkses returned to Atalaya and selected El Encuentro as the mission center of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church in Peru. The Dirkses now faced the problem of establishing a work with a semi-nomadic people.

Sylvester Dirks saw the answer in the combination of an agricultural program, medical services, and spiritual ministry. He acquired 220 acres of land from the government for agricultural purposes. He then hired the Indians to clear and till the land, thus offering them an opportunity to earn and at the same time keeping them near at hand so that he could bring them the Gospel. After some land was cleared, cows, pigs, and chickens were raised to provide food for the missionary family. Such food was difficult to buy because of jungle isolation, and when it did reach the station, it was rather expensive.

While in Pucallpa, Dirks had gained some practice in extracting teeth and giving injections. So he also assisted the Indians medically as best he could. In October, 1951, Dirks wrote to his Board about the services:

Our average attendance through the nine months the station has been occupied is about twenty, maybe just a bit above. Last month's average was 28. Our record attendance thus far has been 41. We minister to both Peruvians and Indians. ²²

But the missionary still had to use the Spanish language because he had not yet been able to learn the Campa dialect.

It is understandable, therefore, that more and more Peruvians were attracted to the Gospel in an area where the church either had not been able to reach them or had neglected them. These Spanish-speaking people sat in the front part of the meeting place, while the Campa Indians, feeling inferior, crowded into the rear seats. Clearly, a completely separate outreach to the Spanish-speaking people was needed. So the Dirkses asked for another couple to come and fill that need.

The Foreign Mission Board of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Church heeded this plea for help and sent the Rev. and Mrs. Joe Walters to Peru in 1954. Both Dirks and Walters agreed that a Spanish work should be started in Atalaya, a town with the largest concentration of Spanish-speaking people in the whole region, and with a population of about 1,000 at the time. For the first month Sunday afternoon services were conducted in a store, and thereafter in a rented house. Catholic opposition soon became evident and attendance decreased. New strength, however, came to the work when a policeman, whose wife was a radiant second-generation Christian and who was himself sympathetic to the work, was transferred to Atalaya.

MISSIONS AFTER MERGER

The merger of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference and the Mennonite Brethren Conference took place in November, 1960. The terms of the merger, as they pertain to missions, did not call for any specific changes in the program. All personnel were retained and the progress was directed by the new Board toward the goal of planting indigenous churches.

Concerns of Mennonite Brethren Missions in Peru

Linguistic Work: Already in 1951 Dirks had found that his many opportunities for evangelism were crowding out the linguistic work that needed to be done if the Campas were to be reached in their own dialect. He writes, "We are sad to have to report having dropped work on the Campa lan-

guage. The pressing duties and responsibilities finally forced us to do this, much as we disliked the very thought of it."²³ Even in 1956, when Dirks returned to Canada for his second furlough, he expressed regret that he still did not know the Campa language because there were so many other things to do, and to learn a language without a grammar was rather difficult. Because of this pressing need, the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions decided in 1961 that Dirks should be relocated closer to the Wycliffe Translators' base and work together with their linguist, Willard Kindberg, who was also laboring with Campa dialects.

The Dirkses transferred to Tournavista, only a short distance from Yarinacocha, the Wycliffe base. They lived here from 1961 to 1963 while Dirks translated the Gospel of John into the Campa vernacular. Then he spent many weeks traveling in Campaland, preaching and teaching.

After a furlough the Dirkses returned to El Encuentro in 1964 for their last three years of service among the Campa Indians. Dirks made several field trips to strengthen the churches and to evangelize. At El Encuentro a Campa brother was already the recognized leader, so that the station no longer required the presence of a foreign missionary. The Dirkses returned to North America to further study and to assume a pastorate while their children went to high school.

Campa Methodology: While the Dirkses were at home in 1956 the KMB Board appointed Johnny and Harriet Toews for Peru, but they did not reach Lima until October, 1957, and arrived on the field in July, 1958. The Toewses made a real contribution to the work, especially in the school and clinic, and assumed responsibility for the Spanish work in Santa Rosa and San Pablo.

Together with the Dirkses, then on furlough, the KMB Foreign Mission Board projected long-range plans for the Peru field. These plans called for at least two couples for the Spanish work and two couples for the work among the Indians. In keeping with this goal the Board appointed the Paul Friesens for Peru. They reached the field in September, 1960. Thus the Walters and the Toewses spent more time with the Peruvians, while Friesens assisted the

Dirkses in the Campa work. Yet because of illness the Toewses had to return home in 1961.

With the coming of more missionaries to the Campa work, different views emerged about the most effective approach. Such differences were expressed particularly by Sylvester Dirks and Paul Friesen, both of whom were sincere in their efforts. Their respective views are possibly best summarized in the 1965 BOMAS Agenda:

Brother Dirks has been greatly burdened for the Campa men who go out and work for rubber, lumber and mining companies to supplement their income. These men leave their wives behind and live in work camps. Often these men come back with venereal disease, their spiritual lives shattered, and some do not come back to their families at all. The women with their families at home also often get into trouble of various kinds. Such conditions make it almost impossible to build a strong church. Brother Dirks asked whether he could not revive farming on our property and give employment to these men and shield them from many evils.

Brother Paul Friesen felt that we should not get involved so extensively in farming again, but that the two missionaries spend more time in evangelizing and Bible teaching in the villages.²⁴

After prayerful consideration, BOMAS in 1965 provided a compromise approach in which an economic development program for the Campa Indians in Peru would be established, with special personnel assigned for this work. The brethren Dirks and Friesen were both released from such responsibilities so that they could give themselves entirely to evangelism and church development.

The LaMont Schmidts were now sent to Peru to work with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, who had been able to establish an agricultural training course at Yarinacocha in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Peru. In this program a limited number of selected men from various Indian tribes come up to the Wycliffe base for a period of training in agriculture. They are then sent home to put into practice what they have learned and to teach others to do likewise. The Schmidts assist not only in agricultural production but also in finding markets for the produce.

Indigenous Leaders: General education is a prerequisite for the training of leadership in an illiterate society. From the beginning Dirks accepted this as part of his program. Already in 1951 he wrote about the preparation of Campa primers, projecting the opening of a Campa day school for children by June, 1953. He asked that another couple be sent to assist in the effort.

In 1962 definite plans were made to take advantage of the teacher training program sponsored by the Peruvian government. This would help promote a strong adult reading campaign in order to make the Scriptures available to the adults in the Campa tribe. As a result some of the church leaders took teacher training and served as salaried teachers in bilingual schools run by the Ministry of Education of Peru. In 1966 there were about 15 bilingual government schools among the Campas run by trained Campa men.

In Atalaya the church day school for the children of believers did not open until 1964. The public schools of the town were run by Catholic priests and nuns and they brought pressure to bear upon the children of believers to return to Catholicism. However, by 1970 the public schools had become secularized and the need for a parochial school was not strong enough to justify a separate school.

From the beginning Dirks began to teach more of the Scriptures to those who responded. By 1952 regular Bible studies were held on Tuesday and Friday nights. Joe Walters did likewise, starting with Bible classes in Atalaya in 1956. In 1958 El Encuentro hosted an Indian Bible Institute operated by the Swiss Indian Mission. Students from five different tribes enrolled for a term of about six to eight weeks. This was the beginning of a relationship between the mission and the Swiss Indian Mission.

In 1968 BOMAS agreed to cooperate with the Swiss Indian Mission Bible School in a training program for church leaders. Under this arrangement BOMAS furnishes one faculty member, presently Paul Friesen, and the students are selected from the mission field and brought to a Bible institute near Pucallpa for training. Of 50 students in this school in 1969, 16 were Campas who enjoyed the special care and guidance of the Paul Friesens.

Mennonite Brethren Missions in Peru Today

The Spanish Work: Since there was not as much difficulty learning Spanish, the outreach to the Spanish-speaking Peruvian progressed more rapidly. The two main centers were Atalaya and Santa Rosa. The workers were eager to indigenize this work as rapidly as possible, an objective that became reality when a national pastor, Juan Rios, took charge of the church in January, 1964. He has continued to guide the work with the evident blessings of God upon it.

In 1961 the Santa Rosa Church had ten members, while Atalaya had eight, with an average attendance in both places of 30. Later these two churches merged, listing a total membership of 24 in 1968.

The Campa Work: Because of the language barrier and the semi-nomadic culture of the Campas, the witness to them required much more effort and patience, with few visible results as a reward. Furthermore, the Campa Indian finds it difficult to break away from his society as an individual; some have tried to do so, but felt constrained to return. From the beginning in May, 1946, some 12 years elapsed before the first two conversions occurred.²⁵

The Campas seem to be particularly reluctant to openly identify themselves with the church through baptism and official membership. In 1961 there was an average attendance of 35 Campas in the services at El Encuentro, but no members in the church. By 1963 there were 15 baptized believers. In 1968 we read of approximately 12 to 13 church centers, which are also educational centers, that receive the visits from missionary personnel from time to time. One year later it was reported:

There are about 24 places along the various rivers of Peru where the Campas meet for worship services. Approximately three to four services are being conducted weekly. They meet in school buildings or other places which they have constructed themselves. It is estimated that approximately 1,200 people attend worship services. The teacher, or some other person who is capable of reading, will take charge of conducting the service. Eight worship centers are being directed by Bible school students. In only six of the worship

centers are there baptized believers. Six believers coming from four different church communities were baptized last October at the time of the annual conference. Thus far there has been no need for offerings, since all the work is done voluntarily by lay brethren who are self-supporting. A missionary seeks to visit these people at the various worship centers once or twice a year.²⁶

The Campa Evangelical Church, in which most of the above groups are represented, was organized in 1968 under the name of "La Iglesia Evangelica Ashaninca."²⁷ Its members declared their unity as a body in a special document.²⁸ Here are signs of an emerging people's movement and the hope is justified that most of the 10,000 Campas in Mennonite Brethren territory can be reached.

URUGUAY

THE LAND

Uruguay, with 72,172 square miles, is the smallest of the South American republics. Located on the east coast between Brazil and Argentina, it is a country of rolling grassy plains, used for cattle raising. The climate is uniformly pleasant, with warm summers and mild winters and moderate rainfall.

Uruguay derives about half of its national income from processing and manufacturing industries. In 1967 the exports were 50% wool, 25% meat, 9% leather goods, besides other items.²⁹

The 1968 population estimates stood at 2,818,000, of which 90% are classified as Latinos, and the rest are Indians, Negroes and other mixtures, with no aborigines. Spanish is the official language.

Independence from Spain came to Uruguay in 1814, when San Martin helped a patriot army overthrow the Spanish occupation forces. The dispute between Brazil and Argentina about Uruguay helped the latter gain its independence from Brazil in 1825. Through the years it has had a rather stable constitutional government, with a plebiscite on November 27, 1966, voting to replace the National Council

with a one-man chief executive. In more recent times, inflation has threatened the economy of Uruguay and revolutionary bands have hampered steady progress.

Although Roman Catholicism predominates, there is separation of church and state and complete religious freedom prevails. The latest available figures show that there are 39,690 Protestants in the country.³⁰ Although the first Protestant missionaries arrived in Uruguay in 1835, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that a more permanent work was begun by the Southern Baptists (1911), the Assemblies of God (1946), and the World-wide Evangelization Crusade (1950), with the Lutheran Missouri Synod, BOMAS and others following. The largest Protestant group is the Waldensian Church, with a membership of 10,000.

The preparatory developments for Mennonite Brethren Missions to come to Uruguay have already been noted in an earlier section.

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS

In February, 1967, BOMAS considered a special request from the church in Uruguay that the couple which was to replace the Neufelds should be bilingual, German and Spanish, because many new contacts with Spanish-speaking people were being made. The recommendation requested, further, a raise in subsidy so that a young national couple could be engaged to work with the nationals. To both of these requests BOMAS agreed.

This was indeed a new emphasis. There was an eagerness to reach the nationals. The Dan Wirsches, who had worked as missionaries in Colombia and had command of three languages, German, Spanish and English, agreed to accept the assignment. On the field the Walter Presas, Uruguayan citizens, were engaged by BOMAS on a part-time basis while they completed their studies. The Presas had already assisted the Neufelds in starting a Spanish Sunday school.

After the Wirsches arrived in March of 1968 they sent a report to the fall meeting of the Board in which they outlined a bilingual program for Montevideo and projected periodical

visits to the churches in the Colonies, and especially work with the young people. A strong effort in house visitation and distribution of literature was also to be maintained. In 1969 the Wirsches reported increased attendance at the Spanish services, an average of 48, while 20 attended the German services.

By next spring the conversion of several people had induced the church to arrange for baptismal services. The church building was also getting too small for the group of worshippers.

The following fall BOMAS was informed that, while the bilingual program in the Montevideo Church was progressing, "Bible studies are being conducted regularly in two other areas in Montevideo by the Wirsches, where a number have already accepted Christ."³¹

Henry Dueck, a Mennonite Brethren member from Canada, writes from Uruguay:

Having accepted the call to teach at the Mennonite Seminary in Montevideo, we wish to make the local Mennonite Brethren Church our church home. How delighted we were to see how the seed that was sown had become a strong Christian witness in an area where we have not seen any other church.³²

Such developments explain why in 1971 the plans called for Walter Presa to continue in the pastorate in the Montevideo Church, a position he assumed when the Wirsches left for furlough. When the Wirsches returned, together with Herman Bullers, also earlier missionaries in Colombia, both couples endeavored to promote church planting. The Wirsches worked with the existing churches and the Bullers explored possibilities of starting a new church.

Two things are particularly notable in this history. First, the missionary spirit broke through ethnic barriers so that a worthwhile effort was made to reach the non-German-speaking people. Secondly, the Lord can use dedicated men, like Wall, Neufeld and Wirsche, to give new direction to the history of a church which might otherwise have ceased to exist.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 5

PANAMA

1. In Panama the missionaries and BOMAS experimented with a new strategy in church planting, sending missionaries into the tribal area for only short periods of time. This was to allow the people to develop a self-reliant church from the outset, and to select and assimilate during the time when the missionaries were absent the ideas they brought. Contrast this approach with those used in Colombia, Brazil, and Paraguay. This new approach raises some questions regarding mission strategy:
 - a) To what extent are resident missionaries a help to the growth of the church, and to what extent does their presence lead to an unhealthy dependence on outside personnel and funds? How does the presence of resident missionaries affect the growth of a national leadership, and of local giving in the churches?
 - b) The Indians had an emotional and mental block regarding their position as respectable human beings because they could not learn to read in the Spanish schools. The missionaries tried to remove this block through a program of literacy and evangelism through Bible literature. By this means the people gained self-respect and achieved some of the deep desires of their lives. To what extent should missionaries be sensitive to and guided by the felt needs of the people themselves—for education, medical care or economic uplift—and to what extent should they define their tasks in terms of the needs they see as missionaries, such as salvation and fellowship with God?
 - c) In the Panama program the churches and missionaries worked on the principle of outreach by invitation rather than touring the countryside to evangelize the people. When the church developed in one village, other villages sent invitations for teachers to come to them also. Generally, Christian teachers and leaders were sent only to places that extended such invitations, and on

condition that the local leaders assist in some way in the work. How does this approach affect the growth of the church, as well as the relationships between the church and the society in which it lives? What expectations do the people have from the Gospel that makes them appeal to the church for help and evangelism? d) What pre-conditions existed that helped make this approach successful? To what extent can it be applied to other tribal societies, to peasant societies, or to urban societies?

2. In the literacy program the missionaries developed friendly relationships with the agencies of the Panamanian government responsible for tribal development, and these are now helping to support the educational outreach to the Indians. In general, what principle should guide the relationships of missionaries to the governments in the countries where they work? Should they identify themselves with the rising national aspirations of the people, with the poor, or with the revolutionary movements that seek to help the suppressed?

PERU, MEXICO, EQUADOR

1. In the larger world of missions there are an unending series of invitations to participate in various types of specialized mission programs, such as Missionary Aviation Fellowship, HCJB radio network, Wycliffe Bible Translators and a variety of agricultural, literature and development programs. These are not designed primarily to plant churches, but to assist existing churches in their work. To what extent should a mission agency such as BOMAS be involved with and allocate resources and personnel to such programs, and to what extent should it concentrate its work on its own programs of church planting? What is the long range aim of the Mennonite Brethren Mission program: to develop Mennonite Brethren churches around the world, to build and strengthen Christian churches whether they are Mennonite Brethren or not, or to act as an agency that serves the special needs of churches abroad?

2. When our own program does not have a place for a young couple with a desire to enter mission work, should the couple seek placement elsewhere, perhaps in an independent mission that requires that they raise their own support? To what extent should our churches participate in and support the work of other mission agencies?
3. A great deal of emphasis is being placed on mass communication methods like radio, T.V., and correspondence courses. Discuss the strengths and weakness of each of these, as well as the particular functions they can serve in planting strong churches. How can those who are reached by means of mass communication be brought into the fellowship and nurture of local churches?
4. What responsibility does the Mennonite Brethren Conference have for churches like those of the Mennonite colony in Mexico that appear to be spiritually dead? What mission principles should guide our approach to such churches? Remember that other churches may feel that we too lack spirituality and may try to bring revival to us.

6

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

THE SPIRIT

For Mennonite Brethren Missions in Latin America the post-World War II period has been particularly significant. Before 1943 Mennonite Brethren missions outside the North American continent were occupied primarily with India and China, beginning work in these countries in 1899 and 1919, respectively. In 1943 the Conference accepted the Kafumba and Bololo fields in Congo, Africa, and, in principle, accepted South America as another theater of missionary action. In 1945 the Board reported on missionary development in Colombia, with the Conference treating Colombia as an accepted field without passing a specific resolution to that effect. But during the same sessions in 1945, with a reported total membership of 17,861, the Conference by formal motion accepted both Paraguay and Brazil, thereby raising the missionary budget from a reported income of \$103,262.91 to \$219,549.10.

Limitations on missions during World War II and the increased affluence of Mennonite Brethren undoubtedly played a part in this expansion. A. E. Janzen writes of the spirit in the churches:

The missionary dynamic asserted itself in great spiritual burdens, evidenced in our Conference and churches in behalf of missions. A deeper prayer burden, and a greater sacrificial spirit of giving, became the antecedents of a magnificent forward thrust that occurred immediately after the close of World War II.¹

Thus the delegates at the 1945 Conference more than doubled the budget to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding program, though there were no accumulated reserves in the treasury.

Such missionary expansion was largely due to a spontaneous spirit of missions in the hearts of believers, which revealed itself in unexpected times and places. This had been true in the case of the Africa Mission Society... and again in Bethany Bible Institute. At the latter it appears that there was an irresistible urgency to go into Colombia. Similarly, J.D. Unruh showed equal zeal for Brazil.

This missionary interest could easily have divided Mennonite Brethren missions potential into separate, possibly competing, missionary movements. It is interesting to note what efforts the administrators and the Board of Missions put forth to fuse all this zeal into one unified effort by the brotherhood. But such fusion was not achieved by pressuring all efforts into a pre-determined mold; rather, the Missions Board responded by showing interest and giving encouragement, and then by restructuring the program so as to make room for such endeavors in the total program of Mennonite Brethren Missions.

In response to the stimulation that came from Bethany Bible Institute and the Western Children's Mission, the Board recommended Western Children's Mission to the good will of the churches and suggested a financial appropriation of \$500 for its operation.² Next, the Board sent the president of Bethany Bible College and Western Children's Mission, Dr. G.W. Peters, on an exploratory trip to locate and recommend a mission field in South America, including Colombia, which was of special interest to Western Children's Mission.

Centralization of administration was kept to a minimum. The constituency was called upon not only to financially support a program, but also to help and implement it. The experiences with the Africa Mission Society had possibly helped to make the administration and Board more sensitive to the need for involving the constituency in more than financial support. Such inclusion of various people and groups in the planning and implementation of its program by the Board resulted in a high degree of integration of the spontaneous missionary interest among the church's laity.

THE METHODS

In general the evidence of a missionary spirit is stronger than that of an over-all missionary strategy in Latin America. The goal of planting churches is usually clear. Yet there is no one dominant method used to achieve that goal. Nevertheless, certain significant methods deserve recognition.

PERSON TO PERSON RELATIONSHIP

Eugene Nida teaches us that "effective communication must be based upon personal friendship."³ Even though we are not certain that Mennonite Brethren missionaries were always conscious of this principle, we find that they practiced this approach wherever Mennonite Brethren Missions prospered. For example, when Albert Enns came to Asunción he walked from door to door, talking to people and distributing literature. When Hans Wiens, Rudolf Plett and Hans Pankratz came to Asunción they followed his example. Today there are four established churches there, with prospects for more.

In most churches started in Brazil by North American Mennonite Brethren Missions, Linda Banman spent considerable time in the community, visiting the people and cultivating face-to-face relationships.

In Colombia "the foot soldiers" of the cross can be seen in action wherever churches were started, whether in the isolated Choco, the rural La Cumbre area, or the city of Cali. The fruitful campaigns in Cali had a positive influence on several local churches, but did not alter the total Mennonite Brethren mission work in Colombia. Finally in the case of Mexico, we notice that every beginning involved a strong emphasis on person-to-person interaction.

The recording of these beginnings may seem almost superfluous and tedious until we perceive overwhelming evidence of this principle in action. We are not forgetting the local evangelistic campaigns that were held in many

places, but these only supplemented the earlier person-to-person contacts.

In summary, we must say that Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America was expanded more by "Shoe Leather Evangelism" than by big meetings and strong pulpiteers. The new strategy projected for the Spanish work in Paraguay, which has already been tried in Estanislao and Villaricea, includes larger crusades, but this is a projection for the future and not part of history. Moreover the long range results of such campaigns have to be determined.

Other denominations have used the crusade or campaign approach with rewarding results. This was the case with the Southern Baptists in Japan, the Crusades of the Americas, and even more so in Brazil. The Assemblies of God have had similar success with their Good News Crusades in many parts of the world. Mennonite Brethren Missions cooperated in some crusades that were held by Billy Graham in Cali and with Evangelism-in-Depth in Colombia, but these did not make a notable impact upon the work. The crusades which the Janz Team conducted in Brazil and Paraguay focused more on German-speaking people, and although highly productive, did not affect the non-German-speaking people with whom Mennonite Brethren missions was concerned.

Mennonite Brethren missions in Ecuador is exclusively concerned with the best use to be made of mass media, of radio in particular. We did note the concern for follow-up that would emphasize person-to-person relationships. In other countries as well, Mennonite Brethren missions has stressed the latter, and the approach has proved fruitful.

However, we must also recognize that person-to-person encounters can be significantly supplemented by other approaches, such as crusades. This is one reason why Mennonite Brethren missions gave heed to Dr. G. W. Peters when he advocated "Thrust Evangelism" at the time when the Board reviewed its over-all missionary program in 1970. This approach will not eliminate person-to-person relationships but supplement them.

FROM MISSION TO CHURCH-CENTERED APPROACH

In our study we have noted several instances where the work had a mission-station-centered beginning. This was the case in Peru, where El Encuentro became the mission station and everything was done to attract the Campa Indians to this station. But we may be hard-pressed to recommend a different approach in the case of roaming people. Later missionaries advocated a departure from this method, but this could only be done after the Indians began to congregate in other centers. In that case they were the school centers promoted under the auspices of the government.

In Paraguay we observe a similar development in the missionary work with the Lengua and Chulupi Indians. The beginning was definitely mission-station-centered, but it did not remain such. The significance of the mission station declined once the roaming and hunting people began to settle near a Mennonite colony where they would find job opportunities, or in villages of their own where community life often developed around a joint economic venture. Such a venture was usually linked to a school. Again there had to be centers, but these no longer needed to be mission centers.

What kept the Panama work from being mission-station-centered? To a great extent this was due to a clearly defined mission strategy and a willingness to experiment with new methods of planting churches. The new strategy was based in part on the fact that the people were sedentary and lived in villages or centers such as Jaque, El Mamey, Lucas, and Chitola. This made it possible to initiate the work without first trying to settle the people in central places.

In general we may conclude that missions usually need a stable community in which to begin work. In the case of nomadic peoples, the missionary may have to establish a center of some kind. But where a stable community already exists a missionary must learn to relate meaningfully to this and build up a church fellowship in such a way that his work will not be mission-centered, but church-centered.

Where the missionary does seek to begin a stable community, extra caution must be exercised so that it does not become built around the missionary, even though one cannot always avoid the image of a mission station.

How can a center for mission activities be built without it becoming a mission station? It is useful to make a distinction between a "mission compound" and a "mission station" (or a center of mission operation). In the writer's view, a mission compound often tends to become an island of the advanced culture from which the missionary comes. It carries with it more emphasis on isolation and a distinct standard of living. A center of mission operation endeavors to avoid the above undesirable qualities, stressing identification of the missionary with the people he serves.

In Mennonite Brethren Missions in Latin America, wherever a center needed to be built, it was generally the center of mission operation that emerged, rather than a compound. In Peru Sylvester Dirks made El Encuentro a "service station" where identification with the people was sought and isolation was avoided. In Paraguay the degree of identification was not as close as in Peru, but this was due, in part, to the fact that the stations served other functions.

It is worthwhile to note that mission compounds in the Mennonite Brethren work in Latin America can be found most frequently in connection with nomadic people. There was a deliberate effort in Curitiba to detach the orphanage from the work of evangelism, so it never acquired the semblance of a compound. The nearest the Mennonite Brethren Missions came to creating mission compounds was in the Paraguayan Choco and the La Cumbre area of Colombia. But this approach was corrected when the new plan for Colombia was introduced in 1957. In Peru the mission station has been abandoned because it had served its purpose. In Paraguay there are now only a few vestiges of missions and the indigenous church is emerging as the institution for fellowship, nurture, and evangelism.

But has the work really become church-centered? Considerable evidence points to an affirmative answer. There is no field in Latin America where the Mennonite Brethren

missionary from North America is officially the ruling authority. But we must not forget that many pastors in these churches, particularly in Brazil and Paraguay, though citizens of the respective country, are ethnically of German-speaking Mennonite Brethren background. To the writer's knowledge, no missionary is involved in permanently pastoring a local church, and no committee in the church is dominated by missionaries. In fact, in some countries the church not only controls its own affairs, but has begun to determine the character of the mission, particularly in Brazil and Colombia. In Mexico the Mennonite Brethren mission withdrew largely because of disagreements with the National Administrative Committee over mission strategy and operation.

Some questions we can only raise, but not answer. Has the Mennonite Brethren work in Latin America shifted from being church-centered to being conference-centered? The autonomy of the local church must be constantly guarded in North America. Have the churches in Latin America been overpowered by the national conference? Of equal importance is the question, has missions become a ministry to the national church, instead of working more directly for the church's expansion? When the mission subsidizes pastors' salaries and supplies finances for church buildings, thereby taking the pressure off evangelism, does it cease to be a mission and become a ministry within the church? Perhaps we can assert with D. T. Niles that missions cease when it sends missionaries to the church instead of into the world.⁴

"SATURATION EVANGELISM" DISTINCTIVES

According to Dr. G. W. Peters, "Saturation Evangelism" has four qualitative distinctives:⁵

1. It aims at gospel saturation of a given community and all participating believers and churches.
2. It provides for a change from centripetal to centrifugal church evangelism.
3. It calls for simultaneous action by all believers and churches participating according to a predetermined and

coordinated schedule of procedure.

4. It seeks to enlist in the movement the highest number of believers, churches, missions and denominations.

In several Latin American countries there is a striking similarity between some of these principles and the practice of Mennonite Brethren missions.

Saturation of a Given Community with the Gospel

Saturation of a given community with the Gospel reminds us of the concentrated efforts of Mennonite Brethren missions in Cali and Asunción. For our purposes, we may simply call this the principle of concentration. Once the new plan for Colombia was adopted, the missionaries concentrated on Cali, seeking to saturate it with a witness for Christ.

A study of the map of Cali will show the eight locations where work is being done. All missionary effort was concentrated here to raise up a sufficient number of churches and bring them to a degree of maturity where the evangelism of the rest of that city could be left to them. Now that this has been accomplished, the missionaries, in consultation with the national church, go to Medellín and other places.

In Asunción, the concentration of effort is indeed striking. The missionaries here are now considering whether the national churches are ready to assume responsibility for the rest of the city. This would free them for work elsewhere.

We cannot resist the conviction that such a policy of concentration in Curitiba would have aided church growth far beyond the present level. With some missionaries in Curitiba, others in São Paulo, yet others in the interior of the State of Parana, and still others in Santa Catarina, the missionary effort is bound to lose some of its penetrating strength in a given community. Similarly, dispersion of missionary strength definitely weakened the forward thrust in Mexico. From Guadalajara in the south to Piedras Negras in the north, and Monterrey and Durango States in between, there was much activity but no concentrated thrust that really made an impact.

Emphasis on a Centrifugal Approach

The emphasis on a centrifugal approach in evangelism, instead of a centripetal approach, is also noticeable in Mennonite Brethren missions practice. The emphasis was on the multiplicity and diffusion of churches, not on the largeness of one church. If all the results of missionary effort had been gathered into the same church, conceivably there might be a big church in Cali and in Asunción. Now there are a number of living cells in close proximity, so that they can engage in joint efforts from time to time and cross-fertilize each other as they associate one with another. Nevertheless, each church is a distinct witness where it is located, seeking to win that community to Christ. We need only read the records of the Villa Colombia Mennonite Brethren Church as an example of how this worked.*

It seems that the principle of multiplying churches in reasonable proximity of each other is important. They can thus strengthen each other. When scattered, they can not help each other. This is in part what happened in Mexico.

Principle of Simultaneous Action

The principle of concerted joint action is not observable in the record of Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America up to 1970, except in the case of Colombia, where the churches participated in Evangelism-in-Depth. However, this participation was not very fruitful. Yet it appears as though the principle of what we shall call simultaneous action could be implemented with profit on a smaller scale, particularly where there is a cluster of Mennonite Brethren churches in one geographic area, such as in Cali, Asunción, and possibly also in Curitiba.

Simultaneous production of needed literature reduces mutual encouragement and cross-fertilization. Cooperative campaigns make the use of radio, and even television, easier and also more profitable—easier, because more

*See pp.97 Also J. J. Toews, pp.

resources are available; and more profitable, because more people can follow up the impact made.

Simultaneous action creates an atmosphere of response in the target area because many people are hearing the message at the same time and reports of conversions spread. A simultaneous thrust bears a stronger cutting edge and can overcome opposition more effectively. In the writer's view, such strategies in Latin America could have advanced the cause of Mennonite Brethren Missions considerably.

Involvement of the Laity

The highest possible level of involvement of all church members was the goal in several fields. The most striking illustration is found in Panama. Responsibility was placed upon the national believers by a strategy that involved the frequent and prolonged absences of missionaries. There was also a unique aspect in the nature of the literacy program, namely the slogan, "Teach one to teach others." It is exciting to read how this was practiced in Panama.

This practice, initiated in the literacy program, was carried over into evangelism. "To reach and win one" was not an end in itself, but to "reach and win one to reach and win another" describes their practice more perfectly.

MOBILITY BUT NOT INSTABILITY

The Apostle Paul in his missionary career reveals a remarkable balance between mobility and stability in his work. In the days of mission compounds missions showed considerable stability but very little mobility. But with the forsaking of the compound, a missionary needs to be careful that mobility is coupled with stability. In Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America we have remarkable examples of what may well be called a biblical balance.

J.H. Franz came to the Indian work in Paraguay in 1946, but in 1960, when the Settlement Board began its work, he was willing to move to Asuncion and relate to the Indian Church as much as was necessary. He did so only after the

Indian Church had been formed and had assumed more of its own responsibilities.

A similar balance can be noticed in the relationship of G. B. Giesbrecht and Dietrich Loepp to the Lengua Church, and of Gerhard Hein to the Chulupi Church. The latter two withdrew to do linguistic work once the Indian Church functioned. G. B. Giesbrecht also withdrew more from the scene.

Albert Enns and Rudolf Plett stayed in Asuncion until the new national churches operated a promising program of evangelism and nurture. Though they still live in Asuncion, they have no governing relationship to the individual church. They remain in the area to counsel, to perform special ministries, and to act as catalysts at the growing edge of the church.

A similar example can be found in Peru, where the Dirkses stayed with the work until the church could function, then withdrew. A number of missionaries in Colombia operated similarly.

However, the record in Mexico reveals a different approach. There we observe a moving of personnel, the establishment of a new work in various places, and then departure before a national church had been born and learned to walk and work according to the Scriptures. The record would bear out, however, that this was not a peculiar weakness of the missionary alone. The Board and the national conference moved personnel around until the desired mobility became a degree of instability and the work suffered. The total withdrawal from Mexico without Scriptural rationale must also be seen as a manifestation of instability. The same can probably be said with regard to the orphanage in Curitiba.

Mobility is not an escape from the pursuit of a goal that is difficult to achieve. Mobility calls for persistence, tenacity, and achievement. It calls for the ability to recognize when a goal has been achieved and when personnel can be moved to another assignment. It leads from one completed task to another. Instability is often an escape from frustration.

Here we are not dealing with the problem of precisely when a missionary should withdraw from direct involvement. Neither are we saying that all those mentioned in our survey

of missions did withdraw at the right time. There are still intimations of paternalism. Nevertheless, history shows repeatedly that after the missionary scaffold had served its purpose, the scaffold was removed.

PEOPLE MOVEMENTS

The phenomena of "people movements" has been described for us by Donald McGavran, who shows how such movements occurred in Bible times and also later in missions history.⁶ These can also be found in the history of Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America.

The Indian church in Paraguay, both Lengua and Chulupi, is an example. Within a period of about 30 years (1935-1965) both tribes had turned from paganism and become largely a Christian people. This does not mean that all is well with these people now, but in the language of McGavran, they are "Christianized." The beginnings of such "people movements" are quite clearly evident in the case of the Campa work in Peru, as well as in the Indian work in Panama. Granted, we find only a beginning, but it is a beginning with promise.

Interestingly, in all three cases the people involved came from an animistic background. This is not true of the biblical examples which McGavran mentions, but it is true of most of the post-apostolic occurrences of "people movements." Does this mean that as the number of animistic people becomes less, "people movements" will also become rarer? It does appear that where there is an animistic people, and the church employs a wise approach in its mission to them, the potential for a "people movement" to Christianity is latent in the situation.

SPECIAL CONCERNS

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONAL CHURCH AND MISSIONS

The problem of church and mission relationship is neither new nor peculiar to Mennonite Brethren missions

in Latin America.⁷ There some have favored an "integration" of relationships whereby the mission loses its identity and the "Boards in the sending countries are to become mainly subsidizing agencies to provide assistance in personnel and funds."⁸ This relationship seems to be favored by some in the Colombian and Mexican national Mennonite Brethren Churches.

The Colombian church has not agreed with BOMAS in the return of some of the missionaries to the field for evangelism purposes. Thus BOMAS was compelled to send some of the former Colombian missionaries to other countries. Moreover, BOMAS felt constrained to withdraw all missionaries from Mexico, partly because of a lack of freedom.

The danger inherent in this type of relationship is that it is too church-centered and not sufficiently proclamation-centered. The question is whether it is right for a national church in Colombia with a total of only about 700 members to hinder the Board's efforts to win new believers and establish new churches. Fulton gives us the biblical view when he writes, "The key word is cooperation---a mutual recognition by both church and mission of the autonomy of each and a resolute mind to work in harmony or purpose and program."⁹

A church that has as its goal propagation, not self-preservation, will have room for missionaries. The mission again cannot become subservient to a national church, but should be a servant who "is a sower of the seed, a planter of churches, and a source of help in strengthening a growing church."¹⁰ It is clear that in such a relationship there will be disagreements, but these, too, must be settled in a spirit of brotherliness. Such relationships have not yet been established in all the countries where Mennonite Brethren missions is active, so the issue remains a subject of concern. At this point Mennonite Brethren missions is facing a spirit of nationalism in Latin America, a problem with which Mennonite Brethren missions has not yet coped successfully.

STRUCTURE FOR THE NATIONAL CHURCH

The church life of the national churches in most countries studied reflects a North American structure rather than an expression of its own culture. This is evident from the descriptions given of the various local churches, especially in the case of the Lengua Indian Church. Such a structure can easily be imposed upon the emerging church, and this may even be done unconsciously as far as the missionary is concerned.

The structure of the church must always be within the biblical framework, but the Scripture leaves a great deal of latitude here. It leaves ample room for cultural expression in the program. The Bible does say that not everyone is to speak at once and requires some form of order, but it does not prescribe any seating arrangements, bodily postures, or length or brevity of a service, nor the number of committees a church must have, or how many members there should be in each committee. The structure of a local church needs to reflect local culture rather than similarity to North American form.

INITIATIVE IN INNOVATIONS

There are several innovations in the offing. We have already referred to "thrust evangelism" as proposed for several fields, with Brazil to receive first consideration. This promises to be a fruitful venture and we would only hope for an early implementation. But it is regrettable that the idea originated in North America and that the negotiations seem to have left the national church of Brazil with the feeling of an imposition from outside. J.B. Toews writes:

I sense very deeply . . . that we are running ahead of our brethren in the south. The publicity which we have given from the office concerning the "thrust evangelism" in Brazil was premature. They are all reading these reports and become very conscious of our procedures. If the reaction of our brother Esau, who is a typical Brazilian, is at all indicative, then we are fail-

ing in our procedures, and it becomes urgently necessary that we be more cautious and do not put on pressure through channels of publicity before they are accepting initiative. . . . We from here must cease to be the spokesman for projected programs. This may also become the case very soon as it relates to several other fields, including India and Japan.¹¹

To the above statement, V. Wiebe replied: "When Herb Brandt and I were in Brazil last summer, we sensed that the Brazilian brethren are sensitive about our taking credit for the work that they do."¹² From the above statements, it is obvious that the administration of the Board of Missions and Services does not want to impose innovations upon the national church, but the danger of imposition is always present.

A similar problem can also be recognized in the projection of a "Program of Theological Education by Extension."¹³ A proposal to have qualified teachers from North America teach eligible students in South America seminary courses leading to a Master's degree awaits BOMAS approval. According to plans, a representative from the Seminary in North America will go to South America to introduce such a program and solicit the approval of the national church in the different countries.

We can almost predict an acceptance of the project by the receiving church. How could we expect them to do otherwise? A fully developed plan from an agency to whom the national church is indebted, presented by a special envoy who obviously is convinced of the merits of the project, will hardly be declined. It is likely to be accepted, but not without an inner feeling that it is a North American program.

It seems preferable to have asked the national church through regular channels whether they sensed a need in this area. Then they could have been asked if they had any suggestions how this need might be met. Then, in consultation with them, someone should have been appointed to draw up the preliminary plans, hoping for acceptance after revision according to suggestions from both sides.

Such an approach requires wisdom on the part of the

sending agency, but it also calls for initiative by the national church. The sending church is often too impatient, but the receiving church may need more initiative.

THEOLOGICAL DISCRETION

Sound biblical theology is basic to any Christian church. If theological precepts based on the Scriptures are compromised, a church ceases to be Christian.

As noted earlier, the Latin American mentality lacks decisiveness and yields quickly to environmental stimuli. This has its advantages, but it can also be dangerous, particularly in ecumenical discussions. Christian unity based on clear biblical teaching is indeed desirable, but ecumenicity which plays down theological correctness needs to be carefully examined.

In Peru the Campa church, known as the "Iglesia Evangelical Ashaninca," is a people's church, with various missions having contributed to its establishment. Now, as long as these all remain evangelical and biblically oriented, things can go well.

The Lengua and the Chulupi churches are also people's churches, but fewer missions have contributed to their birth and progress. When unity based on ethnicity overshadows biblical precepts of faith, the church is in danger theologically.

The same concern for an adequate theological orientation can be expressed in regard to the church developing in Asunción. Not all members are from the same ethnic background, but it is a young church, not trained in the careful discernment of doctrine. The report of this church reads:

Because of the affinity between these churches and several other churches in the area established by the General Conference (General Conference Mennonite, not Mennonite Brethren) mission churches, it is believed that all these Mennonite churches may join into a Spanish Conference of Mennonite churches.¹⁴

A union based on clearly defined theological premises rooted in the Word may be legitimate, but if the union is motivated only by ethnic affinity and geographic proximity,

it may be detrimental to the growth of God's Kingdom. It would be well to ascertain whether the young church has the ability to discern the theological issues involved before such a union is sanctioned or even promoted.

ABSENCE OF LONG-RANGE PROJECTIONS

Except for the plan which the Spanish work in Asunción has proposed, and the Panama plan, the writer is not aware of any specific strategies for the future of Mennonite Brethren missions in Latin America. In committee sessions some projections were proposed, but these have remained more theoretical than practical. "Thrust Evangelism" has been proposed, but has not really been implemented to any real extent to date, and where it has, it must be remembered that it would only be one aspect of an overall program, not a total strategy for a given country. In Peru nothing is envisioned besides the training of leaders in agriculture, teachers and church workers. Perhaps this is all that can be done at the moment. If so, it should be stated how such activities will lead to proposed goals.

Such facts prepare us for the statement by the Christian Service Fellowship in its assessment of Mennonite Brethren Missions: "BOMAS, as the assigned agency of the Brotherhood, needs to rearticulate its objectives, those for the missionaries and Christian Service workers, and to be 'resold' on the validity of its objectives as defined."¹⁵ Consequently the recommendation of this consultant firm reads as follows: "It is urgent that there be a rearticulation (more definitively) of Mennonite Brethren Mission objectives."¹⁶

Without clear objectives, Mennonite Brethren missions flounder, have much activity, call for more and more money, but lack direction. If this continues, one can only wait for the fulfillment of the prophecy that, "Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services will progressively cease to be an organization with a central thrust and will become a loose association of special interests."¹⁷ When there is lack of direction in fields and constituency there is cause for concern. But the indictment reads, "The Board seems more willing to listen than to lead."¹⁸

It is imperative that BOMAS define its overall objectives clearly and effectively communicate them to personnel and constituency. Second, BOMAS needs to make an indepth study of each field to learn how such objectives can effectively be applied to the various contexts. Third, BOMAS needs to measure, at regular intervals, the progress made in each field toward these goals.

We need to remember that missions does not just happen. Without a realistic goal, a work loses direction. The most urgent need for missions in Latin America is a sense of direction for Board, missionaries, constituency, and national church. Such goals will call for a strategy to reach the goal. Such strategy will integrate the potential of missions and church for a forward thrust towards the goal of the salvation of souls and God's glory.

Conclusion

Mennonite Brethren missions entered Latin America unofficially in the 1930s and officially in 1945. BOMAS is now involved in eight different countries. In 1970, it had 50 assigned missionaries and 26 Christian Service workers involved in its program. The total effort up to that time has produced 72 organized churches with a total of 3,260 baptized members.¹⁹ Almost half of these members (1,520) come from the Indian tribes in the Chaco in Paraguay. The other half of the believers takes into account the Spanish churches in Paraguay as well as the other countries discussed, except Ecuador, where no conversions have been reported because of concentration on the radio ministry.

Latin America is a "high potential area" for the Gospel. The possibilities for Mennonite Brethren missions are limitless. The resources are great, for the "Mennonite Brethren present potential has not yet been fully harnessed."²⁰ There is more available in terms of finances as well as personnel. The weaknesses of Mennonite Brethren missions are not insurmountable. God is waiting to bless and prosper. There is every reason to be courageous and to move forward. There is still much land to be possessed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 6

MISSIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

1. In the past decades there has been a continuing debate about the specific goal of Christian missions. Is it to evangelize the world so that all may make a decision to accept or reject Christ? Or is it to plant churches that nurture converts to a mature Christian life and witness within their own communities. In part, the questions are 1) should the evangelization of a country be done primarily by foreign missions or by national churches, and 2) what is the responsibility of the mission for people after they accept Christ as their Saviour? An even more basic question is whether "Christian missions" should be entities and institutions separate from the churches (as in the case of interdenominational faith missions), or whether they represent churches in action. The answers we give to these questions depend to a great extent upon our theologies of conversion and of the church. Discuss both the theological and the strategical implications of each of these positions, and propose a course of action that Mennonite Brethren churches might pursue in starting work in new mission fields.
2. Many of our contemporary problems stem from the success of mission programs in the past. Specialized missions, like radio, correspondence courses, literature, and mass evangelism can be operated with a minimum of interaction with national Christians and churches. Yet missions working with church planting must relate closely to churches over long periods of time. Not only does this involve nurturing the churches, but also recognizing them as autonomous and equal partners in the outreach of the Gospel.

This raises a host of questions. What is the relationship of the missionaries to the national churches: should they be members of the national churches, should they live on a level with their national brethren (in salaries, housing, and the education of their children)? What is the relationship of the national churches to the sending

churches? Do the sending churches have a right to initiate programs even if the receiving churches object? Should the sending churches intervene if they feel the new churches are going theologically astray? Should the national churches join as equal participants in an International General Conference of Mennonite Brethren churches, and should an international mission board be established to which all the churches contribute and in which all the churches around the world have a vote? The relationship between sending and receiving churches, between missionaries and nationals, is one of the burning issues of our day. Using Acts, and our experience in South America as a basis, discuss the issues involved, and outline some basic principles that might govern our relationships to our churches abroad.

3. As one Asian Christian leader said, "We do not want the missionaries to bring us a potted plant. They must bring us the seed of the Gospel and plant it in the soil of our country." As the Gospel is brought from one society to another, it invariably takes new cultural forms—it is proclaimed in a new language, sung to new music, dressed in new customs, and even perceived in new thought categories. What is the core of the Gospel that we seek to preserve in such communication, and what are the cultural forms that can be dropped in the translation? Are we concerned with the people's dress (or lack of it), with the way they organize their families (which may be polygamous), with preserving a democratic form of church leadership, with certain concepts of morality (are premarital sexual relations sin?), or with the people's concepts of God, Christ and the incarnation? What really is our message? Should we bring the people a well-defined theology, or should we bring them the Bible, teach them how to study it for themselves, and continue fellowship even when they arrive at theological conclusions different from our own? Is there not a danger of syncretism in which the Gospel is mixed with the local religions and loses its identity? Discuss the problems that arise when the church is planted in another

culture, and suggest some basic guidelines that we can use in such situations.

4. In view of world population growth and increasing serious food shortages, is it the responsibility of the North American Mennonite Brethren churches to seek to alleviate human sufferings by means of relief programs, medical, and agricultural missions? Given our Mennonite Brethren theology of a concern for the whole person, how can we integrate these important ministries into our program of church planting? Is there a danger that concern for people's physical sufferings might dim our concern for their ultimate destiny? What about people becoming Christians in order to receive, or in response to programs of relief and uplift? Are these proper motives for people to accept Christ?
5. Is there still a place for foreign missions considering today's strong national feelings and a resentment against foreign ideas and persons? What are the essential qualifications for missionaries serving abroad today?

APPENDIX A

STUDY GUIDE

Paul G. Hiebert

Dr. J.J. Toews has charted the historical development of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in South America. In doing so he has highlighted the major issues that the mission boards, the missionaries and the church leaders faced in the past.

But the value of such a study is not only to show what God has done in the past, but also to make us sensitive to the tasks He has given us today. It is well, therefore, that we review briefly the issues he raises in order to learn from them. Many of these issues still remain with us, and we need the past to show us the methods that have been most effective, as well as the pitfalls to avoid.

I. ISSUES IN THE PAST

A. Issues related to the goals of Mennonite Brethren missions program

1. *Evangelism versus church planting*: What is the primary task of Christian missions—to evangelize the world, or to plant churches? This has been one of the central questions facing missionaries and mission boards for over a century. Early in the twentieth century a loud voice was heard in favor of evangelism. The motto at the International Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh (1910) was, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation." The impact of this idea on mission strategy was great. Missionaries went to the most distant tribes and peoples so that all might hear and believe.

However, throughout this period there were those who raised a voice of caution. What happens to those who accept Christ and are left, often illiterate and ignorant of the Bible, with no church to nurture them? And who believes at the first hearing of the Gospel? Most people need to hear the

Gospel again and again before they understand its meaning and make a meaningful decision to follow Christ. Many of those who started out with a stress on evangelism ended up planting churches as they had to face up to the question of what to do with the converts.

As Dr. Toews points out, in South America the Mennonite Brethren Board of Foreign Missions set as its primary goal the planting of churches. This was due, in part, to its experiences in India, Africa and China, and, in part, to the strong theology which the Mennonite Brethren had of the church as a brotherhood of believers. Following a pattern of mission work developed earlier in other countries, the missionaries in Colombia were at first stationed on mission compounds. These were semi-permanent centers, not only for the evangelization of surrounding areas, but also for church building ministries such as education and the training of church leaders.

It soon became evident that the traditional missionary compound would not fit into the South American scene. While it has often served an important function in the early days of modern mission era in other lands, it also had a tendency to become a rigid, mission-centered institution that hindered the development of an autonomous national church. Fortunately, South America had been spared to some extent the long heritage of colonial rule, and the mission compounds that flourished under its wing. Moreover, the rising spirit of nationalism in South America called into question the permanence of the mission structure itself. By the time the Mennonite Brethren began their work in South America the focus was shifting from missions to the national churches, and with the exception of the early work in Columbia, they avoided building institutionalized mission compounds.

2. *Tribal versus urban societies:* Like many other missions entering South America after the Second World War, the Mennonite Brethren chose to work among the unevangelized tribes in Paraguay, Colombia, Panama, and Peru. In the past, these had often been open to the Gospel, and many had experienced large people movements in which whole lineages and tribes turned to Christ. In fact, as Dr. Toews shows, Mennonites of the Paraguayan colonies had begun a

work among tribesmen. It was also clear with the rapid spread of industrial civilization that tribes which survived the shock of rapid cultural assimilation into modern life would soon be absorbed into one of the great religious traditions of the world.

Several factors caused the mission board to re-assess its strategy in Colombia. First, the question arose whether work among tribals was the best way to build the church in a world that is rapidly becoming urban. Should we not rather go to the cities which are the centers of communication and influence in modern societies? Was this not the method Paul used? This question relates closely to that of mission goals. If the primary task is to evangelize, then the unevangelized tribes demand top priority. However, if our task is to plant churches, in the long run the cities are of critical importance.

A second factor precipitating the re-assessment of the mission's strategy was a historical one. Reacting to the influx of evangelical missionaries, the Roman Catholic Church persuaded the Colombian government to close the tribal areas to Protestant missions. In addition, persecutions made work in the rural centers very difficult. As is so often the case, historical events forced changes in practice that were perceived necessary in theory. With some notable exceptions Mennonite Brethren missions in South America turned to the cities where the multitudes are.

B. Issues related to urban strategies of mission work

1. *Grouped versus scattered churches:* The move to the cities raised other questions, and opened the doors for testing new strategies. One of the questions was, should the missionaries be concentrated in a single city, or should they be spread out in different cities. In favor of the former is the argument that all must hear the Word of God. In favor of the former was the argument that planting a number of churches in the same city would lead to a closer fellowship that would strengthen them all. A small church cut off from a broader Christian fellowship has a difficult time to survive.

In Colombia the Board of Foreign Missions pioneered a strategy of concentration. Most of the missionaries were moved to Cali, and there they set about planting a series of local churches. Although for a number of reasons the growth of the church has been slow, the experiment seems to justify the original thesis. A group of churches now exists and the board is now exploring the possibilities of moving the missionaries to a new city.

2. *Institutions versus no institutions:* One of the oldest debates in missionary circles centers around the role of institutions in evangelism and church planting. There is little disagreement that Bible training is needed to prepare church leaders, but what about Christian schools, hospitals, and orphanages?

In non-literate societies almost all missions, irrespective of their mission philosophies, started elementary schools to teach their converts how to read the Bible. Many later added high schools and colleges and hospitals with the justification that these were effective in evangelizing the upper classes, necessary for the training leaders, or part of a Christian service to the needs of the people.

So far the evidence from tribal and peasant societies shows, with some important exceptions, that institutions are not particularly effective in bringing people to a commitment to Christ. Furthermore, with the exception of Bible schools, their contribution to the building of churches is indirect. Their greatest value has been in building good will in the community towards the church, and in pre-evangelism—preparing people to accept Christ by providing them with a knowledge of the Gospel. Institutions often require large investments of money and personnel that might be used elsewhere, and often develop rigid structure that lacks the flexibility to adapt to the needs of the time. In view of all of this, are Christian institutions justified, and, if so, should they be built by the mission or by the national churches?

In countries with few modern educational and medical facilities, Christian missions have led the way in building schools and hospitals. But what about modern nations like Colombia and Brazil where the state is taking responsibility

to build them? What are the functions of Christian institutions in these societies? These questions and more were raised in discussing whether or not the American school in Colombia and the orphanage in Brazil should be continued. Both had been useful at an early stage of the work, but later the mission board chose a course of action involving a minimum of general institutional work, and, therefore, phased them out. In comparison with their work in India and Africa, the Mennonite Brethren built few institutions in South America. Rather, they concentrated on building churches by means of personal witness and Bible study groups.

3. *Middle classes versus low classes:* The move to the cities posed another problem. With which social class should the missionaries work? Tribal and village societies are relatively homogeneous, and the Gospel can be preached simultaneously to all, for all live and interact in the same community. Not so in the city. Here people are divided into classes and ethnic groups, and the relationships between these groups is often minimal.

In South America the small upper class is closely identified with the Roman Catholic Church, which has traditionally pursued a policy of working with the elite of a society. The Mennonite Brethren, like other Protestant churches, have generally identified themselves with the general populus. In South America they therefore made little effort to reach those in positions of economic, social and political power.

Several reasons lent support to work among the lowest classes in the cities. Historically, the poor have often been marginal in their societies, and have had the least to lose socially in leaving their old religious beliefs. They have often been among the first to turn to Christ. Moreover, in South America the poor are also the most numerous, and, in terms of this life, the most needy. But work among the poor posed certain problems. It is difficult to build self-supporting churches among them because of their poverty; and because of their illiteracy, it is difficult to train church leaders—at least leaders patterned after those in the North American churches. Furthermore, in spite of their desires for a better life, many of the low class people in South America are strongly committed to their Catholic rites.

On the other hand, people in the still relatively small but growing middle class in countries like Colombia and Brazil are looking to the outside world for their models, and many are open to new ideas. They are the leaders of the new economic, social and political movements that are sweeping these countries. If they turn to Christ, they have the leadership, the resources and access to the communication channels to build their churches and evangelize their fellow countrymen.

Yet church planting in the urban middle class is also difficult. It requires long hours of building personal relationships and nurturing new believers in the Word. The work is often invisible to the public eye, but the churches that are built are often stable and lasting. Both in Colombia and Brazil the Mennonite Brethren have made real attempts to reach the middle class.

4. *Growth by extension versus growth by mass evangelism:* Once national churches come into existence, how can the mission best assist them to multiply and grow? In Colombia there is a plan to move the missionaries to a new city to start new churches and to allow the existing ones to develop their autonomy. In Brazil the churches have adopted a "Bermuda grass" approach to outreach. They start small groups in neighboring areas which, in time, have developed into new churches. The greatest need has been for pastors and leaders to serve these new congregations.

After facing increasing deficits in the late 1960s and the need to cut back the mission program, the Board of Missions and Services again found itself in a position to expand after 1971. Giving for missions had arisen dramatically. The question was raised, how could the mission help the young churches in programs of outreach? The program of Thrust Evangelism was negotiated with the churches in which national leaders and missionaries join in extended evangelistic campaigns designed to win a group of people to Christ. The new Christians are then to be organized into a new church. The formation of the evangelistic team has drawn key national leaders out of the churches and slowed their expansion by extension. It is hoped that the campaigns will lead to the founding of new churches, al-

though the program is too new to arrive at a definite conclusion. The question remains whether church growth is best achieved by extension, or by large evangelistic campaigns.

C. Issues related to tribal strategies of mission work

1. *Individual versus group conversions:* In Colombia and Brazil the Mennonite Brethren turned their attention to the cities, but they had not lost their interest in tribes. Three programs were carried out, each of which raises certain crucial questions relating to mission strategies.

The first of these is the work among the Chulupies and Lenguas of Paraguay. There long years of seemingly fruitless witness and labor suddenly brought in a big harvest as people turned to Christ in a large mass movement. Whole groups came to baptism in what is sometimes called a people's movement.

Given our strong North American sense of individualism, and a theology that requires a personal commitment to Christ, such a movement created certain dilemmas. Were the people really saved if they decided as groups to become Christians? And what about their motives? For many the movement was a search for a new identity. Their old culture was crumbling through exposure to the agricultural, literate society of the Mennonite colonies. So they turned to Christianity and the missionaries for help. Should missionaries discourage such movements because of these varied motives, as has sometimes been done in the past? On the other hand, to turn them away is often to close the door of the Gospel to them—to force them to turn elsewhere for an answer to their needs.

People movements by themselves do not produce a church. But they do open the doors for the planting of churches. The people are now open to listen to the Gospel, and with instruction and love they can be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. Such movements mark the beginning not the end, of the work of the missionaries.

People movements raise other questions. To what extent should the mission be concerned with the economic and

social problems of the people? These are very much a part of their lives, and cannot be sharply differentiated from their religious beliefs. And what attitude should a missionary take towards the people's traditional culture? Should he seek to preserve it as much as possible so as to communicate the Gospel in terms they understand, and to provide them with a sense of identity and continuity? Or should he try to bring them his own culture and his own forms of religious practice at the risk of creating serious psychological dislocation due to too rapid cultural change? These are critical issues now facing the missionaries working among the Paraguayan tribes.

2. *Resident versus non-resident missionaries:* When the door closed for work among the tribes of Colombia, it seemed as though the Mennonite Brethren mission to the Waunana had come to an end. When many of them migrated to Panama, those who had worked with them earlier saw a new opportunity to start a Waunana church. The new beginning permitted them to take a fresh look at their methods, and to design an approach that would avoid the errors of the past, namely, large investments in mission compounds, dependency upon missionaries and a lack of sensitivity to the total needs of the people.

The new experiment called for two missionaries to spend short times in the field, sharing ideas and assisting the churches. Then they would withdraw for a time to let the churches select and adapt the ideas to their specific needs. Instead of importing foreign patterns of leadership, the missionaries allowed the indigenous Christian leaders to take responsibility for the work from the outset. The church was never dependent upon missionaries for survival, though resident missionary Glenn Prunty was there to assist.

One of the basic concerns was to help the people in all areas of their need, rather than to dichotomize these into spiritual and secular needs. This approach was consistent with the Mennonite Brethren heritage of concern for the total person.

The Indians had an emotional and mental block regarding their position as respectable human beings because they

could not learn to read in the Spanish schools. The missionaries tried to remove this block through a program of literacy and evangelism. The spoken language was reduced to writing, and reading texts were prepared based on the Bible. As the people discovered that they, too, could read, and as they experienced new birth and the fellowship of the church, they developed a new sense of identity and worth. With the help of the missionaries the Christians began to establish schools, introduce simple sanitary measures and explore the possibilities of acquiring ownership over their forest lands, all of which have helped them to face the rapidly spreading peasant culture encroaching on their territories. In a sense, the Gospel has been for them not only the good news of eternal life in Christ, but also the bridge to a meaningful life now.

A second pattern developed in Panama, namely, evangelism by invitation. Others saw what was happening to the Christians, and they too wanted to learn to read, and hear the Gospel. When they sent invitations for Christian teachers to come to their villages, the churches appointed young men and opened up a new work. The inviting village was asked to help in the construction of a school and the support of the teacher. In this way the church had a ready entre into a village, and placed the responsibility for the development of the work partly upon the local leaders. So far there have been many more invitations than can be filled.

The work among tribals in Peru resembles that in Panama in several important ways. The missionaries were not resident in the area, and they ministered to the total needs of the people. The result, again, was solid growth in the churches.

D. The role of the Mennonite Colonies

1. *Christian isolationism versus outreach:* Occasionally radical missionary strategists have suggested that one of the most effective ways of reaching people for Christ is to move into their midst, take up their citizenship and become one with them. Due to historical circumstances, this, in

fact, was forced upon a number of European Mennonites who settled in Paraguay in a number of colonies. They soon became concerned with the evangelization of the people around them.

The outreach of the colonies raises an important question, one of integration versus isolation in relationship to their Spanish-speaking neighbors. As young people from the colonies began to learn Spanish, they began to interact with other Paraguayans. Many in the colonies believe that the maintenance of a Mennonite culture is essential to the life of their churches, but some among the young people feel that Christians are called not only to witness among their neighbors, but also to join with the new Christians in a single fellowship. Historically, the relationships of church and culture has always been a difficult one to resolve, particularly for the Mennonites.

2. *Evangelism of the unevangelized versus revival of lifeless churches:* The situation of the Mennonite Colonies in Mexico was quite different from that in Paraguay. Here the Mennonites had retained a cultural form of religion, but seemed to have lost faith in the new birth and the believer's church. What responsibilities do the other Mennonite churches have for them? In a sense, it is easier to justify (and sell to contributing churches) mission work among the unevangelized than among those who call themselves Christians, among the publicans rather than among the Pharisees. Church building too often consists of herding sheep from one fold to another. But what about cases where we are convinced that the organized church is spiritually dead? Do we not have a responsibility to bring these people the good news of the Gospel? And how can we bring the message so that they will listen and believe? These are some of the questions facing the Board of Missions and Services in its work in the Mennonite Colonies of Mexico.

The Board has followed a quiet program in the Mennonite colonies. It has sent in mature people who minister to the needs of the people, and lead them in Bible studies. In this way the ground is being laid for revival, and the first signs of renewal are beginning to appear.

E. Questions of the administrative structure

1. *Board versus field administration:* One of the issues of the 1950s was whether the responsibility for planning and administering mission programs lay with the mission board or with the missionaries. Prior to the Second World War, the Board of Foreign Missions in Hillsboro was responsible largely for the North American side of the work: for raising money, recruiting personnel and keeping the churches informed. Missionary councils on the fields were responsible for the planning of mission strategy and administering field matters, such as the assignment of missionaries, and mission-church relationships.

This arrangement showed several weaknesses. There was a great deal of individualism in the work. Each missionary was more or less autonomous in the work assigned to him. The result was a great deal of variation in programs. Some missionaries stressed institutions, others evangelism, and still others church planting. Some organized churches with pastors, others with elders or other types of local leaders. This created problems in the national churches. Field administration also resulted in a mission-centered program. The church was dependent on the missionaries, and the prospects of indigenizing the work seemed remote.

Another weakness of this approach was the frequent lack of systematic, long-range planning for the work. Missionaries know their field situations better than those in the home office, but they are often unaware of the general body of mission knowledge, and of the lessons that have been learned from mission experiences elsewhere. They are caught up in everyday decisions and annual plans for the work, and have little time to evaluate the programs and make long range projections. Institutions such as schools, hospitals, evangelistic teams and mission programs have a way of perpetuating themselves. It is difficult for those personally involved to ask the question whether the program is needed at all, or if it is the best use of the resources available. In the end decisions generally deal with how to keep the program going.

In view of these problems, the Board of Foreign Missions worked towards moving planning and policy making to the home office. The transition created a great deal of discussion and, at times, dissension both on the fields and at home in the churches and mission board. The matter was finally decided at the Yarrow General Conference (195) when the responsibility for administering the total mission program was given by the Conference to the Board of Foreign Missions. This called for a change in the field administrative structure from relatively autonomous missionary councils to missionary administrative committees. In recent years there has been a move to slowly return some administrative powers to the fields, but matters of general policy and program remain under the jurisdiction of the home board. The need for long range planning is as urgent as ever.

2. *Division versus integration of missions and services:* For historical reasons (in part to the assistance given to Mennonites emigrating from Russia to the Americas) the Mennonite Brethren had separate programs for missions and for Christian services such as relief and rehabilitation. As the programs of Christian services evolved into a permanent, worldwide ministry, the dichotomy between missions and services was called into serious question. It did not fit the Mennonite Brethren theology of ministry to the total person. Rather it divided human needs into those that were spiritual and those that were temporal. Missions was primarily concerned with evangelism and church planting—although missionaries did distribute relief supplies provided by the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations and the MCC (mission schools, hospitals and orphanages can also be considered a type of ministry to the whole person). On the other hand, programs associated with the Board of Christian Services were often unrelated to church planting.

Some attempts were made to bridge the gap. Christian service personnel were assigned to assist in various mission fields, but these programs were far from satisfactory. The problem, in part, was that the term "missionary" had come to designate a particular professional role, and missionaries often did not accept Christian Service workers as equals in the work.

In order to integrate the two programs, the Board of Foreign Missions and the Board of Christian Services were integrated in the mid-1960s into a single body, the Board of Missions and Services (BOMAS). The resulting board was large, fifteen members—almost too large to be a working board. It had to work out the problems of its own organizational structure, of the integration of the mission and Christian service programs on the fields, and of retaining a proper balance of these in various ministries.

It is easy to fall back into a dichotomous view of missions, to stress only the spiritual needs of people, or their earthly needs. This is true both at the level of planning the work for a given field, and at the level of dealing with individuals in one's everyday ministry. But in this attempt to integrate ministries to the whole man, the Mennonite Brethren are pioneering an approach that has few precedents in the broader world of modern missions.

3. *Ecumenicalism versus separatism:* In the past on the mission fields the Mennonite Brethren have followed neither a program of ecumenical merger with other churches, nor a separatism and withdrawal from broader Christian cooperation. They have stressed the need to build Mennonite Brethren churches, but have also cooperated with other missions and national churches in joint ministries.

This picture was altered somewhat with the merger of the Mennonite Brethren and the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren churches in North America. The Board of Missions and Services was now responsible for integrating two different mission programs into one. Many of the KMB missionaries were working under various interdenominational mission boards at the time, so BOMAS established working relationships with these agencies.

The picture is being altered further by nationalist pressures in the countries where we serve. Churches in other lands do not have the loyalties to the history and culture that have done much to maintain denominationalism in North America. Consequently there are moves in many South American countries towards greater cooperation, and even merger, of the churches. The questions are many: should the Mennonite Brethren mission or churches work

with other missions and churches in programs like Bible translation, Evangelism-In-Depth, and Missionary Aviation Fellowship? If so, with whom should they work, and to what extent should cooperation or merger take place?

The rapid changes taking place in the Roman Catholic Church in some parts of South America, particularly in Mexico, are calling for further re-assessments of inter-church relationships. The widespread support for reading the Bible, and, in some cases, the move towards a more evangelical theology are having a profound effect on the picture of Christianity in South America. How should the Mennonite Brethren react to all of this? These are questions the national churches, missionaries and BOMAS now face.

4. *Specialized ministries versus church planting ministries:* Over the years the Mennonite Brethren have participated to some extent in specialized mission ministries such as radio work, Bible translation and Missionary Aviation Fellowship, but they have concentrated their work in programs of church planting.

Participation in specialized ministries raises the question of how these fit into the broader picture of missions. The number of programs we can join seems endless, but their contributions to the establishing of churches are often uncertain.

An example of the issues involved is found in the Mennonite Brethren participation in the radio work of HCJB. Missionaries were assigned for years to prepare Christian broadcasts in Russian and German which were beamed, in part, to the German-speaking communities in Brazil. Although many letters were received in response to the programs, no churches were born directly from this ministry. In order to follow up the radio ministry, BOMAS sent one of the radio evangelists to visit these communities in Brazil and, hopefully, to help organize those who had accepted Christ to form fellowship bodies. The results have been encouraging. So also is the fact that the radio broadcasts seem to be helping the evangelical German Lutherans in their attempt to bring a revival in their churches.

As national churches are born, the question of church-relationships arises. The need to indigenize the work calls

for more national workers and less missionaries. The sending churches, however, want to send missionaries as well as money. Consequently, it is easy at this stage to assign missionaries increasingly to specialized inter-church ministries. The danger, of course, is that the mission program loses its focus on church planting, and its efforts are diffused in a number of ministries, many of which may be good, but which, in total, do not contribute directly to the growth of the churches. As we shall see, one of the crucial issues facing today's missions is how to contribute to the growth of national churches without infringing upon their autonomy or creating dependencies.

5. *Mennonite Brethren versus faith missions:* The Mennonite Brethren churches have had a strong vision for missions. One measure of this is the great number of young people who apply for service. This raises the problem of selection. Who should be sent? As national churches grow, they increasingly ask for missionaries with specific ministries such as Bible teaching, pastoral counseling, and technical assistance. Moreover, people of maturity are needed. Therefore, not all who apply can be accepted—not necessarily because they lack qualifications, but because their particular gifts are not needed at a particular time. What is the responsibility of the Mennonite Brethren churches to those not accepted into the Mennonite Brethren mission program?

Many Mennonite Brethren young people enter mission service in other missions. These are generally not responsible to any church, and assume no responsibility for the support of their missionaries. Each candidate is expected to raise his or her own support. Should the Mennonite Brethren churches support such missionaries who go from their midst and thus encourage the proliferation of special mission agencies within the Brotherhood? And what relationships should BOMAS have with these missionaries and agencies?

If we need evidence that God is working in the world now, we can find it in the story of missions. From a human point of view, to introduce so great a change in the beliefs and lives of people looks impossible. But the fact is that

the church in South America is, and is thriving. Dr. J. J. Toews has presented us with an overview of God's work, and we hope that in the reading, you will also think through some of the issues our forefathers faced, and that you will feel some of the sorrows and joys, frustrations and triumphs, loneliness and the excitement, and, above all, the sense of God's presence that has been a part of the Mennonite Brethren mission movement.

II. CRUCIAL ISSUES IN THE FUTURE

These have been some of the issues in the past, but what of the future? Many of the old questions remain: some unresolved, some the object of continued debate, and some reappearing in new forms and in new contexts. In the meantime, several new forces have entered the stage of mission history that will dominate the scene in the next decades. If the good news of God's salvation is to be heard by all peoples in our times, the church will have to come to grips with them.

A. Nationalism and the identity of the churches

One of the rampaging floods of our time is the spirit of nationalism. With devastating swiftness it has wiped out worldwide colonial empires, and leveled nations. Imperialism, once a word of pride, is now a term of contempt.

Nationalism takes many forms. It is a cultural performance recapturing the forgotten music of the past, a slogan scrawled on a wall calling for missionaries to leave, an Independence Day celebration with anthems and flags, and an army on parade. How should missions respond to the rising aspirations of people to be their own masters? For good and for bad, nationalism is very much a part of our world.

The implications of nationalism for missions are several fold. For one, in many countries it has been accompanied by a revival of the traditional religions of the past. No longer is the Christian missionary the only one on the street corner, or in a school or hospital, proclaiming his

message. Now there is often a preacher seeking to convert Christians back to their old faith. In South America with its tradition of Roman Catholicism, this led to a branding of Protestants and their Gospel as "foreign," to closing the doors to mission work among tribals, and, at times, to the persecution of new converts. It also led to attempts to identify the existing church with the state. How should missions react to all this? As we have already seen, the picture is complicated by the fact that at times this revival of past religions has led to a renewal within the Roman Catholic Church in South America.

Nationalism has also expressed itself in the young churches started by mission work—in their search for a self-identity and self-reliance. They want to be treated as brothers and equals in the Kingdom of God. This includes their taking responsibility for spreading the Gospel within their own regions. But no church can do this if it is controlled from the outside, either by finance or personnel. As we shall see, this raises the issue of mission-church relationships.

Finally, nationalism challenges the theology of the universal church. If churches are purely human institutions we can expect them to be organized along the lines of human political and social groups. But should the Church not transcend these human dimensions? Does it not have a responsibility to evangelize all peoples? Its practice should reflect its theology—namely the unity of the Body of Christ. But what does this mean? What human forms does this spiritual unity take?

For some the answer is the ecumenical movement in which all churches are merged organizationally into a single worldwide body with a central administrative structure. Most evangelicals have shied away from this approach. Merger often calls for a compromise on doctrines they hold sacred. Moreover, there is no evidence that the merger itself leads to the growth or strengthening of the churches.

For others the answer has been international denominational churches. The Mennonite Brethren, for example, have invited representatives from churches outside Canada and the U.S. to the General Conferences. But, so far, there

has been no plan to reorganize the General Conference along lines of proportionate representation and equal voting powers for all Mennonite Brethren churches around the world.

Denominational affiliations do not answer other questions facing our sister churches abroad. What relationship should they have with other evangelistic bodies and with nationalistic church movements within their own countries? And what ties bind them to the sending churches? For the most part the receiving churches lack the denominational loyalties that are based on a common historical and cultural heritage. And finally, how shall these churches create their own identity and yet remain part of a broader brotherhood?

For BOMAS the question increasingly arises whether the goal is to found denominational churches, or is its task to plant churches in unevangelized areas, and to assist evangelical churches, our own and others, wherever Christians are found?

So far nationalism has influenced the structure of our churches and missions profoundly and only now are we beginning to come to grips with its implications in the area of missions.

B. Church-mission relationships

One of the central problems facing contemporary missions is its relationship to the churches. It is a product of the success of missions in the past. Had there been no converts, there would have been no church, and no such relationships. The building of good relationships is always hard. This is true in the home. It is also true in international activities.

At one level the problem is a structural one—how to organize relationships between a mission and the churches it plants. For some sending churches, missions was a verb—the church in its evangelistic outreach. The evangelists, teachers, and doctors they sent became members of the newly founded churches. There was no missionary organization distinct from the new churches. Those who followed this model did not face the question of transferring

authority from the mission to the church. The focus was on the church from the outset. Indigenization consisted of replacing foreign personnel with national ones, but within the same structure.

On the other extreme were the "faith" missions in which Christians organized independent mission agencies, unaffiliated with any particular churches. This led, abroad, to the formation of missionary bodies that were responsible for the work, not to the national churches, or even directly to the supporting churches, but to the autonomous missionary agencies. This strong distinction between the mission and missionary (now these are used as nouns), and the people created difficult problems for indigenizing the work. Because the mission at some point must turn the work over to the churches, the questions arise of when, how, to whom, and how much. Too often if we wait until we think the time is right, we will never leave.

In practice the Mennonite Brethren, blessed with a strong theology of church, have followed the first model at home. Missionaries are recruited and supported by the sending churches through BOMAS. Abroad, they have copied other conservative missions and made a structural difference between the missionaries and the national churches. The result is that they, like others who followed this pattern, are facing the task of redefining mission-church relationships. It is clear that the paternalism of the past must go, but how does one structure truly Christian working relationships between the mission and the churches? As the churches grow, should the missionaries be withdrawn, or placed under the jurisdiction of the national churches?

Can BOMAS initiate new programs without the consent of the receiving churches? And do they have a right to veto who shall be sent? Are nationals to be paid the same salaries for the same jobs as missionaries, particularly when they replace missionaries? And what should be done with the institutions built by missions which the churches cannot support? Finally, is the task of modern missions only to send money to young churches—is there no place for missionaries?

Today BOMAS and the churches in South America are

seeking to build new relationships in which they move beyond mission-centered programs to church-centered ones. We need to have the faith that the same Holy Spirit who is working in us is also in them, and we must allow them the greatest right we have given ourselves, namely the right to make mistakes.

At another level, the problem of mission-church relationships is one of attitudes. On our side it is all too easy for missionaries from North America to have a deep-seated feeling that they are somehow superior to the Christians abroad. This temptation is due, partly to the assumption that their culture is superior, and partly to the fact that they are often seen as the "spiritual fathers" of the national churches. A person may not admit, even to himself, that the feelings are there, but where they are present they express themselves in subtle ways, creating a barrier to Christian fellowship and brotherhood. They seek to create in others a dependency on themselves, and to import culturally foreign ways because these are thought to be the best. Today's missions calls for missionaries who not only act as brothers, but also have dealt with the deep-seated attitudes of superiority so common in our culture.

C. Cultural factors

From the outset, missionaries have been conscious of cultural differences. They learned new languages and customs, and went through culture shock. They faced cross-cultural misunderstandings and the difficulties of translating the Gospel into new cultural idioms.

Today we are becoming increasingly aware of even more fundamental problems created by cultural differences. One of these is the syncretization of the message. All ideas and beliefs are perceived and communicated in cultural forms, such as words, rituals, objects and activities. In other words, messages are ideas linked to forms that can be communicated. Since the forms are visible, it is easy to assume that when people use the forms, they understand and accept the message. For example, if people in a young church sing the words of a song, or accept baptism,

or profess salvation, we assume they understand their meanings. We therefore fall into the easy trap of measuring the communication of the Gospel in terms of the forms people use: their attendance at church, their testimonies and their prayers.

But the same forms can have different meanings to different people. The danger when we communicate the forms we use to express the Gospel is that the people learn the forms, but not the meanings. The people then give old meanings from their traditional religions to the new forms. The result is syncretism—a mixture of old and new beliefs dressed up in new practices. In the long run we end up with a sub-Christian religion that is less receptive to the Gospel than the old one.

The communication of the Gospel is essentially the communication of beliefs and ideas, but it must also include the extent to which we get these across. Nevertheless, we must test carefully to see that the people understand the Gospel in biblical terms. Only then will the church become alive and indigenous. But this means that the forms of religious expression will often vary, for the same ideas are best expressed in other cultures in other forms. For instance, democracy may work as a form of church polity in North America where people are accustomed to voting for their leaders, but it is not necessarily the best form of polity in cultures where the normal patterns of leadership are different.

What forms will the Gospel take in new cultures? To some extent the missionaries can help determine which forms can be used and which must be dropped. But ultimately this decision must be made by the churches that know the culture intimately.

A second current problem arising from cultural differences is theological autonomy. To what extent should the sending church exercise control over the theology of the receiving church, particularly when the former feels that the latter is going astray? It is easier to encourage young churches to become self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating than to let them become theologically autonomous.

In view of the pressing social needs in South America there are many church leaders who are stressing a theology of liberation—one that expresses a concern for those who are poor and oppressed. Some of them advocate a Christian Marxism and revolution. How should the Mennonite Brethren from North America respond to all this? We need to realize that missions can bring to people the Word of God, but the Holy Spirit must interpret it to them in terms of their own cultures. Only then will the church be fully indigenous.

D. Poverty, famine, oppression and the Gospel

One of the forces changing the international scene is the massive explosion of population. At present the world is adding one billion people to its population every seven years, or 200,000 per day, most of them in the under-evangelized areas of the world. After three centuries of mission work, the churches are facing a greater task than ever before.

The growth of population has been accompanied by poverty and the threats of famines. In seventy-five countries having more than 2.2 billion people, the per capita value of all income, goods and services produced in a year is \$100, as against \$3,000 in the U.S. and Canada. Most of the poor in these countries make less than \$50 a year per person. Fully two-thirds of the world's people are undernourished.

By contrast, people in the U.S. constitute less than 1/15th of the world's population, yet they consume over one-half of the resources used in the world each year. In 1970, it is estimated they used more than one hundred billion gallons of gasoline to power eighty-seven million cars close to a trillion miles, producing one hundred million tons of pollutants as byproducts. In the same year they threw away two and a third billion tons of refuse which included seventy-four billion bottles and cans.

Poverty and famine have always been with us, but today's systems of communication and transportation make us more aware of human needs, and give us the ability to help. All

reasonable projections predict that famines and wars for resources will increase greatly, and will fill our headlines. What responsibilities do Christians have to those who suffer? Can we sit back as they die of starvation?

The example of Christ is clear. He combined an inner spiritual life of fellowship with His Father with an outward witness and service. The Mennonite Brethren theological heritage is also clear: a stress on a simple life style, a zeal for evangelism and a concern for human needs. We have provided relief and aid around the world. There are questions on the details of its implementation—should rehabilitation take priority over relief? Should aid be given primarily through local churches, etc.?—but the general commitment has a firm theological and personal base. The task facing BOMAS is to prepare the churches and the organizational structures for the Christian ministries that will be needed in the coming decades.

The problem of oppression is a more difficult one, theologically. How should we respond to the oppression of serfs in the large haciendas of South America, to the liquidation of tribes in the Amazon basin, to the tyranny of people living under military dictatorships? Can the Mennonites, with their faith in love and nonviolence, not only as ideal principles, but also as realistic guides for daily life—can we provide a workable alternative to a helpless submission to oppression, or a violent revolution? We have done better in meeting the economic and social needs of people than in helping them in their struggles against suppression.

As we read this history of Mennonite Brethren missions in South America, we catch a glimpse of the way God has worked in our midst in the past. May it also challenge us to renew our commitments, with greater knowledge, insights and dedication, to the work that He is giving our generation to do.

Paul G. Hiebert
Secunderabad, A.P., India
1975

APPENDIX B

MENNONITE BRETHERN MISSIONARIES IN LATIN AMERICA

BRAZIL

Name	Began	Terminated	Type of Service
Arndt, Victor	1964	1965	Church Work & Education
Arndt, Helena	1964	1965	Church Work & Education
Banman, Linda	1948	Active	Personal Evangelism
Boldt, John	1966	Active	Church Worker Training
Boldt, Lydia	1970	Active	Church Worker Training
Born, Floyd	1965	Active	Church Work & Administration
Born, Bertha	1965	Active	Church Work & Administration
Dueck, Jacob			Education & Medical
Dueck, Olga			Education & Medical
Faul, Donald	1962	1966	Bible School & Evangelism
Faul, Marie	1962	1966	Bible School & Evangelism
Gerbrandt, Kenneth	1958	1967	Orphanage
Gerbrandt, Carol	1958	1967	Orphanage
Klassen, John	1959	Active	Church Worker Training
Klassen, Patricia	1959	Active	Church Worker Training
Kliwer, Paul	1962	1971	Church Worker Training
Kliwer, Rachel	1962	1971	Church Worker Training
Lomheim, James	(1955)		Aviation Service
Lomheim, Darlene	(1955)		—Transferred to U.S.A.
Nightingale, David	1966	1971	Evangelism & Church Planting
Nightingale, Annie	1966	1971	Evangelism & Church Planting
Pastre, Walter	1960	1962	Church Worker
Pastre, Nevonna	1960	1962	Church Worker
Peters, Frank	1960	Active	Church Worker Training
Peters, Helene	1960	Active	Church Worker Training
Pries, Olga	1953	1959	Medical
Thiesen, Edna	1962	1971	Medical
Thiesen, Erven	1950	1970	Evangelism & Church Planting
Thiesen, Lorene	1950	1970	Evangelism & Church Planting
Unruh, J. D.	1946	1948	Children's Work—Orphanage
Unruh, Anna	1946	1948	Children's Work—Orphanage

Wagner, William	1966	1971	Evangelism
Wagner, Marilyn	1966	1971	Evangelism
Wiebe, James P.	1962	Active	Evangelism & Church Planting
Wiebe, Lois	1962	Active	Evangelism & Church Planting
Wiens, Edith Eleanor	1963	1968	Education
Wiens, Katherine	1962	1965	Medical

COLOMBIA

Bartel, Harry	1948	1953	Church Building & Evangelism
Bartel, Martha	1948	1953	Church Building & Evangelism
Buller, Harman	1960	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Buller, Anna	1960	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Dueck, Doris Harder	1953	1958	Medical & General Mission Work
Dyck, Annie	1946	1964	Children's Work
Dyck, John	1946	1957	Evangelism & Education
Dyck, Mary	1946	1957	Women's Work
Fadenrecht, B. J.	1950	1955	Education for Missionary
Fadenrecht, Ruth	1950	1955	Children
Friesen, Ebner J.	1956	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Friesen, Martha	1956	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Friesen, Ernest	1955	1969	Literature, Films & Evangelism
Friesen, Elsie	1955	1969	Literature, Films & Evangelism
Friesen, Milton			Education of Missionary
Friesen, Evelyn			Children
Geddert, Jacob	1967		Church Worker Training
Geddert, Mary	1967		Church Worker Training
Goertz, John	1965	Active	Church Worker Training
Goertz, Janice	1965	Active	Church Worker Training
Golbek, Lydia	1947	1951	Medical & Personal Evangelism
Klassen, Ruth	1966		Education
Kroeker, Martha	1955	1963	
Lentzner, Kathryn	1946	1957	Evangelism, Youth Work, Bookstore
Loewen, J.A.	1947	1957	Linguistics & Evangelism
Loewen, Anne	1947	1957	Linguistics & Evangelism
Loewen, Ruth	1948	1959	Education & Extension Evangelism
Loewen, Peter	1966	Active	Education
Loewen, Eva	1966	Active	Education
Penner, Mary Schroeder	1946	1952	Medical & Evangelism

Quiring, Wilmer	1952	1963	Bible School & Evangelism
Quiring, Eugenia	1952	1963	Bible School & Evangelism
Reimer, Hedy	1968	Active	Medical
Reimer, Vernon	1956	Active	Church Worker Training
Reimer, JoElla	1956	Active	Church Worker Training
Savoia, John	1961	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Savoia, Daphyn	1961	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Schafer, Lillian	1946	1952	Education
Tieszen, Elizabeth	1957	1970	Christian Education
Voth, Alvin	1960	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Voth, Vera	1960	Active	Church Planting & Evangelism
Voth, Herta	1952	1962	
Wiens, Esther	1956	1970	Medical
Walter, Joe	1968	Active	Evangelism
Walter, Janette	1968	Active	Evangelism
Wirsche, Daniel	1945	1956	Education & Station Admin.
Wirsche, Elsie	1945	1956	Education & Station Admin.
Wirsche, David	1945	1957	Linguistics & Evangelism
Woelk, Gertrude	1962	1969	Medical

ECUADOR

Arndt, Victor	1964	1965	—Transferred to
Arndt, Helena	1964	1965	Brazil
Balzer, Cornelius	1970	Active	Radio
Balzer, Elfrieda	1970	Active	Radio
Born, H. C.	1969	1971	Radio
Born, Esther	1969	1971	Radio
Huebert, Peter	1964	Active	Radio Evangelism & Church
Huebert, Maria	1964	Active	Building
Jantz, Hugo	1956	1960	—Transferred to
Jantz, Katherine	1956	1960	Europe
Kornelson, Ann	1966	1971	Radio
Nightingale, David	1953	1964	Radio Evangelism - Transferred
Nightingale, Annie	1953	1964	to Brazil
Schroeder, Sally	1956	Active	Radio & Television
Wiens, Mary	1963	1970	Radio

MEXICO

Alaniz, I. M.	1953	1969	Administration
Alaniz, Kycuba	1953	1969	Administration
Cooper, David	1954	1956	Evangelism & Bible School
Cooper, Grace	1954	1956	Evangelism & Bible School
Friesen, Mabel	1964		Evangelism & Education
Gerbrandt, D. J.	1955	1957	—Transferred from
Gerbrandt, Linda			Oklahoma
Guenther, John B.	1963	1964	
Guenther, Mrs. J. B.	1963	1964	
Heinrichs, Willie	1963	1968	Literature & Films
Heinrichs, Betty	1963	1964	Literature & Films
Janzen, Eugene	1962		Evangelism & Church Building
Janzen, Lillian	1962		Evangelism & Church Building
Kroeker, Elsie	1959		Medical
Lomheim, Jim	1947	1954	—Transferred to
Lomheim, Darlene	1947	1954	Brazil
Martens, Mary E.	1954		Education of Missionary
			Children-transferred to Paraguay
Petkau, Elizabeth	1963	1964	Medical
Petker, Dan W.	1957	1969	Evangelism & Church Building
Petker, Eleanor	1957	1969	Evangelism & Church Building
Quiring, Wilmer	1958	1958	—Transferred from
Quiring, Eugenia	1958	1958	Colombia
Schulz, Marie	1955	Active	Medical
Thiesen, Edna	1950	1960	—Transferred to Brazil
Toews, David	1950	1958	
Toews, Elereeca	1950	1958	
Wiebe, Joe	1968	1968	
Wiens, Richard	1960	Active	Personal Evangelism &
Wiens, Delores	1960	Active	Church Building
Wirsche, David	1950	1958	
Wirsche, Dora	1950	1958	

Vogt, J. W.	1971	Active	Evangelism
Vogt, Martha	1971	Active	Evangelism
Nick, Adolph			Evangelism
Nick, Katherine			Evangelism

PANAMA

Goertz, John	1971	Active	Church Work - Transferred
Goertz, Mrs. John	1971	Active	from Colombia
Harrison, James H.	1964	1968	Education
Harrison, Elizabeth	1964	1968	Education
Prunty, Glenn		Died, 1974	Associates in
Prunty, Mrs. Glenn		Active	Church Planting

PARAGUAY

Duerksen, Martin	1948	1949	Extension Evangelism
Duerksen, Kaethe	1948	1949	Extension Evangelism
Enns, Albert	1956	1971	Church Planting & Evangelism
Enns, Annie	1956	1971	Church Planting & Evangelism
Epp, B. P.	1937	1949	Evangelism, Church Building,
Epp, Susanna	1946	1949	& Education
Franz, H. H.	1946	1970	Administration & Evangelism
Franz, Helen	1946	1969	Administration & Evangelism
Giesbrecht, G. B.	1937	Active	Indian Church Work
Giesbrecht, Katharina	1937		& Evangelism
Giesbrecht, Mariechen	1953		
Hein, David	1952	Active	
Hein, Mrs. David	1952		
Hein, Gerhard	1949		
Isaak, Kornelius	1949	1958	
Isaak, Maria	1949	1958	
Jantzen, Miriam	1961 ⁹	1966	Youth Work
Klassen, Ann	1960	1971	Literature & Medical
Klassen, Jacob	1949		
Klassen, Katharina	1949		

Kroeker, Heinrich	1947		
Kroeker, Greta	1957		
Lepp, Dietrich	1948		
Lepp, Tiena	1948		
Martens, Henry	1966	1969	Education & Church Work
Martens, Sarah	1966	1969	Education & Church Work
Martens, Mary E.	1960		—Transferred from Mexico Education & Church Work
Penner, Walter	1953	1956	Evangelism
Penner, Maria	1953	1956	Evangelism
Plett, Rudolf			
Plett, Hilde			
Rennert, Walter	1954		
Rennert, Irene	1954		
Toews, Victor	1952	1956	Education & Evangelism
Toews, Anna	1952	1956	Education & Evangelism

PERU

Dirks, Sylvester	1944	1967	Literature & Evangelism
Dirks, Mattie	1944	1967	Literature & Evangelism
Friesen, Paul	1960	Active	Evangelism, Bible Training
Friesen, Maurine	1960	Active	& Church Building
Geddert, Jacob	1964	1967	Bible School & Evangelism
Geddert, Mary	1964	1967	—Transferred to Colombia
Plett, Herta	1966	1970	Education
Schmidt, LaMont	1967	Active	Agriculture & Evangelism
Schmidt, Shirley	1967	Active	Agriculture & Evangelism
Toews, John	1957	1962	Education, Medical Work,
Toews, Harriet	1957	1962	Evangelism & Church Building
Walter, Joe	1954	1968	Evangelism & Church Building
Walter, Janette	1954	1968	—Transferred to Colombia

URUGUAY

Foth, Tobias	1950		
Foth, Mrs. T.	1950		
Neufeld, J. P.	1962	1967	
Neufeld, Mrs. J. P.	1962	1967	
Wall, John	1957	1961	
Wall, Mrs. J.	1957	1961	
Wirsche, Daniel	1968	1970	Church Planting
Wirsche, Elsie	1968	1970	Church Planting

VENEZUELA

Wakelin, Bruce	Evangelism, Church Building
Wakelin, Nina	Literature Translation

APPENDIX C

MENNONITE BRETHREN

YEAR	BRAZIL	COLOMBIA	PARAGUAY	ECUADOR
1945		4,430.00		
1946		21,111.14	6,734.20	
1947	6,180.00	13,160.00	7,700.00	
1948	9,335.00	21,200.00	5,800.00	
1949	6,320.00	35,000.00	17,125.00	
1950	6,140.00	31,350.00	8,955.00	
1951	6,170.00	31,300.00	7,055.00	
1952	7,070.00	38,050.00	7,505.00	2,500.00
1953	9,720.00	45,200.00	9,785.00	
1954	9,010.00	74,500.00	11,135.00	3,096.00
1955	8,760.00	60,275.00	13,010.00	3,096.00
1956	17,500.00	60,825.00	19,535.00	3,300.00
1957	21,000.00	75,090.00	15,505.00	8,400.00
1958	18,619.08	37,850.00	16,605.00	8,660.00
1959	20,700.00	32,455.00	15,000.00	10,645.00
1960	45,308.39	44,288.12	29,600.65	13,709.24
1961	52,667.86	52,640.93	49,235.91	10,746.48
1962	49,501.48	72,736.22	26,450.41	10,270.03
1963	59,454.97	60,007.07	30,249.31	11,084.88

FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES OF

MISSIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

YEAR	MEXICO	PANAMA	PERU	URUGUAY
1945				
1946				
1947				
1948				
1949				
1950				
1951	1,150.00			
1952	7,200.00			
1953	9,950.00			
1954	10,650.00			
1955	12,510.00			
1956	11,420.00			
1957	16,600.00			
1958	18,385.00			
1959	19,290.00			
1960	32,396.69	1,112.48		
1961	42,858.73	4,518.07	9,178.39	
1962	33,630.52	4,471.40	17,029.00	
1963	38,642.30	7,245.06	10,906.13	

FINANCIAL EXPENDITURES OF

YEAR	BRAZIL	COLOMBIA	PARAGUAY	ECUADOR
1964	62,715.30	79,101.35	34,709.52	16,085.49
1965	60,573.58	79,741.23	58,286.07	18,066.00
1966	75,571.95	75,365.10	53,822.04	14,558.77
1967	97,296.72	99,893.98	65,610.26	14,430.50
1968	119,803.96	125,458.38	73,412.98	10,080.71
1969	67,957.26	80,603.80	44,387.25	14,130.89
1970	104,013.18	109,322.10	67,712.76	16,396.86
1971	94,463.67	69,043.00	61,599.14	23,008.27
Total	1,035,852.40	1,529,997.42	756,525.50	212,265.12

MENNONITE BRETHREN MISSIONS

YEAR	MEXICO	PANAMA	PERU	URUGUAY
1964	73,704.01	9,765.79	12,032.77	
1965	73,859.94	17,827.44	23,713.76	
1966	84,351.15	17,036.31	31,445.01	
1967	50,049.23	18,500.81	20,599.06	4,761.19
1968	41,003.76	13,959.60	18,700.47	10,271.67
1969	18,991.91	2,607.00	9,218.74	4,429.79
1970	20,833.70	4,222.18	11,637.37	6,715.20
1971	1,397.75	3,605.03	14,876.90	15,828.36
Totals	618,874.69	104,871.17	179,337.60	42,006.21

GRAND TOTAL— 4,437,723.90

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- 15 Report of the "Selbststudium des Instituto Teologico Evangelico" prepared by a specially appointed committee for the Bildungs- und Fuersorgekomitee der Suedamerikanischen Konferenz (1967), p. 3.
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- 20 Berichte und Beschluesse der fuenften Paraguayischen Konferenz der Mennonitischen Bruedergemeinde, p. 19.
- 21 Board Minutes, July 14-17, 1966, p. 31.
- 22 Board Minutes, June 23-25, 1967, p. 19.

- 23 N. Wiebe, *Denkschrift Betrifft Oberschulzwahlen in Fernheim*, 1942. Wiebe was leader of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church at the time.
- 24 B. H. Unruh's letters to Herrn Oberschultze, October 19, 1935, October 8, 1937, and his letter to J. Siemens, October 8, 1937.
- 25 K. B. Hildebrandt, *Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde zu Friesland*, in report to author, 1969.
- 26 Robert Foth, "Zwanzig Jahre Mennoniten Bruedergemeinde in Uruguay, Sued Amerika," *MENNONITISCHE RUNDSCHAU*, March 5, 1969, p. 14. As Foth has published a detailed history of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1969, I am greatly indebted to him in this section.
- 27 Robert Foth, March 29, 1969.
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